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MARCH 2006

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Ready To Upgrade?

Tap into the latest classroom technology.

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COVER 24

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Integrating tech into your teaching can enhance student learning. Yet, embracing the ever-changing world of gadgets and the Web can be a bit daunting. Let us help you navigate the new techno-landscape.

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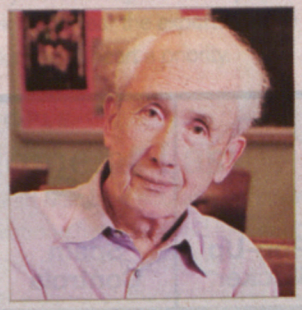

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PHOTO TOP: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER; SMALL PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: RACHELLE OMENSON, ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN, COURTESY OF JO ANN EVANS, AND AP/WORLDWIDE PHOTOS

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LARGE ILLUSTRATION: ILLUSTRATION WORKS; PHOTOS FROM TOP: ERIC WILLIAMS, D. KEVIN ELLIOTT, CHRIS ANDREWS, CHARLES VOTAW, AND STEVE SHELTON
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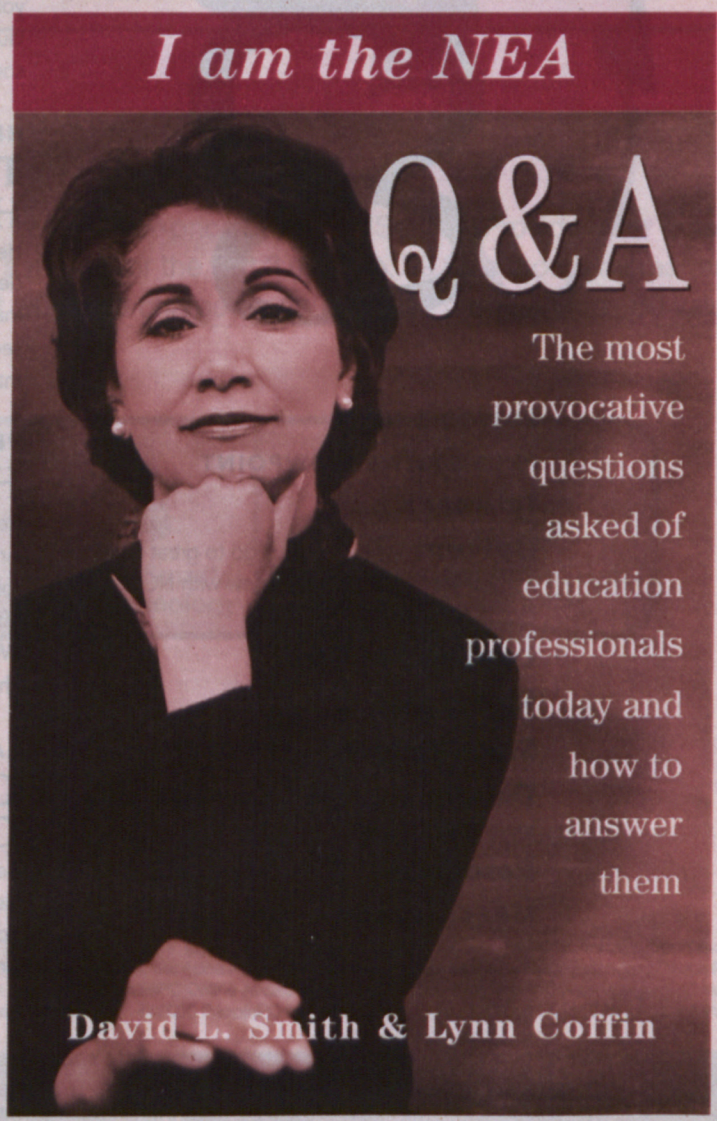
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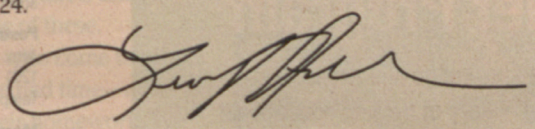
Q&A
The most provocative questions asked of education professionals today and how to answer them
David L. Smith & Lynn Coffin

All This Talk About Tech

When I created my first Microsoft PowerPoint presentation years ago, I was impressed—with the fabulous new program, and with myself for learning such a fabulous new program. So last year, the fact that elementary school kids (including my daughter) were doing projects on PowerPoint still had a wow factor for some parents (including me). But for many of the students—and teachers—incorporating a new program into daily learning was hardly noteworthy. ¶ Technology is a tool for teaching, not the lesson itself. I got that much. But we here at *NEA Today* remain impressed with how much tech is out there for educators to learn, to master, and then to teach. It's not all downloaded into your brains, à la *Matrix*. Where do you find the time to learn this stuff? What are the best practices and products out there? ¶ Practical issues around technology in the profession will receive increasing coverage in the magazine. Please talk to us about questions, large or small, you have about technology and your job. You can e-mail us at neatoday@nea.org, visit us on the Web at www.nea.org/neatoday, or send us a low-tech but equally effective snail mail to our address at the bottom of this page. ¶ And check out this month's cover story to learn more about integrating tech into your classroom. Our fabulous cover person, Oregon instructional assistant Michelle Brown (doesn't her face say it all?) and others will talk about getting comfortable with new classroom technology. It all starts on page 24.



EXECUTIVE EDITOR LEONA HIRAOKA

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Leona Hiraoka

MANAGER, MANUFACTURING AND PRODUCTION
Bill Fischer

WRITERS/EDITORS
Michelle Chovan
mchovan@nea.org
Mary Ellen Flannery
mflannery@nea.org
Sabrina Holcomb
sholcomb@nea.org
Alain Jehlen
ajehlen@nea.org

WRITERS/EDITORS
Cynthia Kopkowski
ckopkowski@nea.org
Cindy Long
clong@nea.org
John Rosales
jrosales@nea.org

NEA TODAY ONLINE
Bonnie Gardner
Joe Hammond
Cindy Long
Karen Zauber

PRODUCTION
Marsha Blackburn
Paula Chavez-Talley
Christian Lopez
Alice Trued

ART DIRECTION
Groff Creative, Inc.

ADVERTISING SALES
Rich Datz
rdatz@educationworld.com
856-983-7199

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
Branita Griffin Henson

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Deborah Wilburn

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Chris Bartolomeo
Sheree Crute
Thomas Grillo

INTERNS
Desiree Miller
Ritu Sharma

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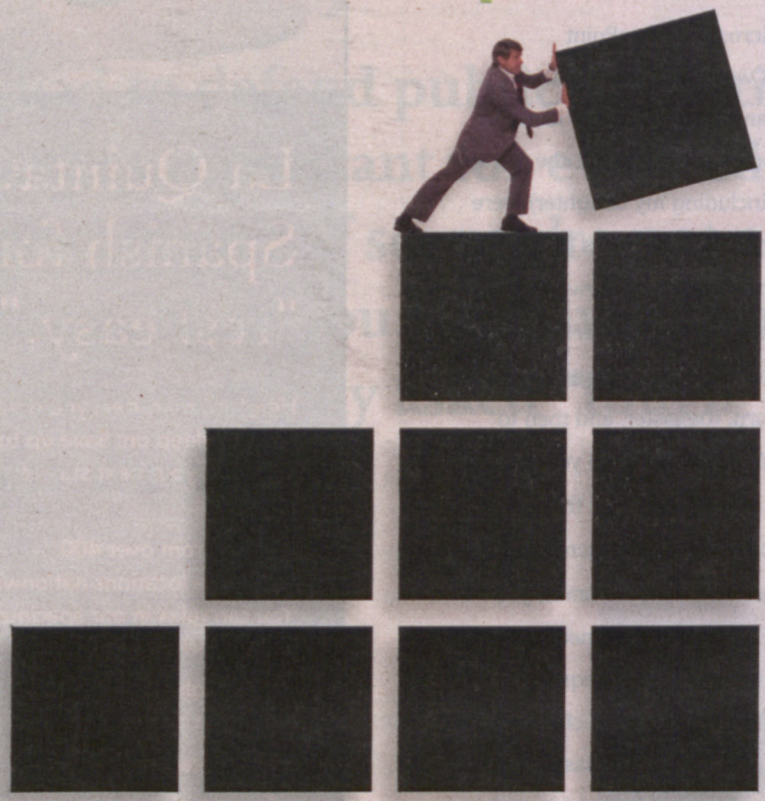

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

Two Americas, One Bridge

Public school teachers and ESPs: the bridge for America's future

Occasionally, the media will focus attention on the countless disparities in our great nation—health, education, wealth, and housing. There is no shortage of gaps between the haves and have-nots.

But if you believe the hype, and the stories in the media, almost everyone in America is healthy, wealthy, and wise. Absent a heinous crime, a natural disaster, or a slow news day, we don't hear very much about the disparities that exist between the two Americas. Media stories focus on Washington scandals, corporate greed, and the war in Iraq and rarely on the real-life stories of middle income and working poor families and their daily struggles. The problems faced by these families are tough to address and easy to ignore.

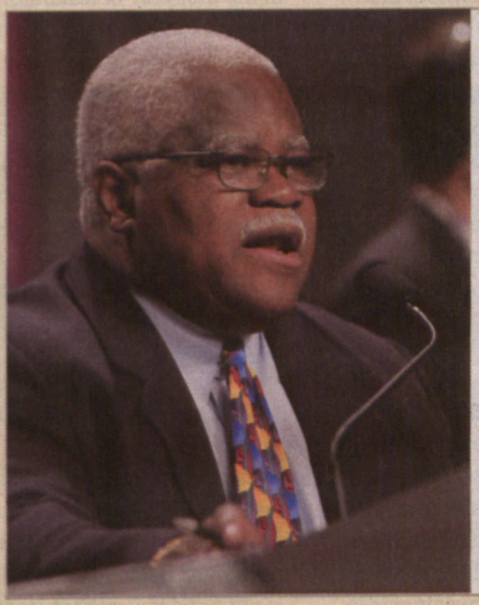
But as public school teachers and education support professionals, we confront these issues every day in classrooms and schools across the nation—in urban and rural settings. We know there are two Americas—one prosperous, one struggling. One with affordable housing, adequate health insurance, and safe schools—another with none of these.

We work with children who come to school unprepared because no one had time—or took time—to help them with their homework. We see children who are too often sick. We know children who are dealing with the ravages of alcohol and drug addiction. And, we see children who come from homes where parents work hard to give them things they themselves didn't have, while missing out on opportunities to give them the things they really need to succeed in life.

Despite all that we know and see, we do our best to ensure that all children attend public schools with environments that are conducive to good teaching and learning. Unfortunately, there are times when our best isn't enough and our students fall in the gaps. Even still, we never give up. To us, these children are much more than a statistic. They are a name, a smile, and often a tug on our hearts. Our joy as educators is to see their eyes light up with excitement and enthusiasm when they learn something new or master a skill set. We are committed to doing all we can to help children realize their dreams and become productive and contributing members of society.

But ours is no easy job, especially when instead of providing more resources for education, Congress and the President drastically cut education funding. Recently, the President signed a federal budget that leaves millions of children behind. The 2006 budget exacerbates the gap for 4 million children who are eligible for Title I of the No Child Left Behind law by cutting funding for the law below the originally established levels. And the budget signed by President Bush leaves 3.2 million children out of Head Start, a program that prepares children for success in school.

I certainly don't have all the answers, but I do know from personal experience that public education works. It is the engine of opportunity in this country, and a quality education can help narrow the gap. And if public schools are given adequate and equitable funding, we can provide all the children who sit in our classrooms with the skills, knowledge, and tools they need to succeed in life.



"If public schools are given adequate and equitable funding, we can provide all the children who sit in our classrooms with the skills, knowledge, and tools they need to succeed in life."

—REG WEAVER

What's more, I know that labor unions also make people's lives better. The right of every working man and woman to form a union and bargain collectively is a fundamental human right. Back when unions represented a larger share of the private sector workforce in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the gap between the haves and the have-nots in America was closing, not widening as it is today.

NEA is committed to doing all that we can to ensure the right of all children to attend quality public schools. We will continue to insist that America lives up to its promise to the children of both Americas. We will continue to be the bridge. And we will continue to fight for the rights of all workers so that the parents of all children can earn a living wage. They deserve no less. Thank you, Team NEA, for working to make Great Public Schools for Every Child.

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: MATT FERGUSON

Talking Up Sizing Down

In a small school there is no anonymity. Everyone is necessarily more accountable for their behavior. When teachers or administrators walk down the hall, we can call most kids by name. Students know there is little chance they will get away with misbehaving. There is also more space! When hallways and cafeterias are crowded and students shove just to get to their lockers, it's more likely someone will feel threatened. That's when fights break out. When I was at a large school, the number of fights seemed to increase with the size of the student body.

GERA SUMMERFORD
Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

I've worked at both small and large schools and much prefer the smaller ones. My special education students are treated much better in small schools. Other students know the children and watch out for them, rather than taunt them.

KIM PEABODY
Blytheville, Arkansas

Smaller is better. When is school more like an assembly line? In a large school. When is school more like a real community? In a small school. Students are treated as individuals. They know people in the school who can help them and they don't have to rebuild their support system every year. Teachers at these schools can affect lives long after students leave them.

THOMAS NEDREBERG
Eureka, Utah

DRESS TO IMPRESS OR FOR LESS STRESS?

If we are to make effective personal connections with students ("Should teachers wear business attire to school?" February), we must put students at ease. I propose a compromise. Let's leave the three-piece suits and the sweatpants in our closets, and instead permit the neat but casual dress that allows us to perform all aspects of our jobs in comfort.

KAY HERBERT
Buckfield, Maine

In my first year of teaching, my superintendent suggested that I come to school in a jacket and tie every day. I said if he could guarantee that I would no longer have to jump up on the heater to reattach the falling drapes, crawl under the sink to stop the leak, battle the often unbearable heat in my un-airconditioned room, or worry about snagging my pants on the edge of the desks, I would be happy to dress in designer suits every day. He said to forget it.

WILLIAM J. CHARNEY
Hackettstown, New Jersey

To gain the full support of the public and instill the premise that teachers are really professionals, NEA and state organizations must begin to emphasize that dress is not a shallow surface issue. Schools would do teachers a great service by instituting a professional dress in-service each year, especially for new teachers. Dress says, "Treat me respectfully. I love my job. I expect to be adequately compensated. I woke up this morning rested, prepared, and ready to teach."

GERALD WILLIAMS
Cleveland, Tennessee

In the late 1950s when I started my teaching career, I was told to wear a suit. Fifteen years later, I was delighted when female teachers were allowed to wear slacks. For the rest of my career, I could be comfortable sitting on the floor with my students, lifting disabled students from wheelchairs, and cleaning up the inevitable messes young children make. When respect for educators results from their expertise, rather than how they are dressed, they are truly professionals.

PHYLLIS CHILDS
East Jordan, Mississippi

(ON)LINE DEFENSE

Don't assume that all online credits are easy to obtain (Last Bell, February). Online courses and schools vary as widely as the U.S. education system. Online courses serve a variety of purposes and varying audiences. I am a public school science teacher with National Board certification. I do not consider my online course to be any less demanding than my traditional courses, nor are the other courses available through our system.

JODIE HARNDEN
Pendleton, Oregon

I agree students should not do their work online. However, if teachers are allowed to do work online and get graduate credit, why can't the students do it?

DOLORES LEITHNER
Linden, New Jersey

CYBER COMMENTARY

MORE ON SMALL SCHOOLS

Parent involvement is just as important as the size of the school. I taught for many years in a middle school of 700 to 800 students in a small town. There was plenty of parent involvement. I attended a large city school before students were bused out of their district, and parents were close to the school. If parent involvement is deemed important, the school is important.

Lowell, Indiana

I taught at a small school during its first year. The expectations on the staff were overwhelming. I had no planning time during the day and meetings, tutoring, and professional development were scheduled after school. The school district offered little support and expected us to put in long hours. I finally left. It is wonderful to now work in a district that appreciates my work.

From the nea.org discussion board

WANT TO WEIGH IN?

Chat with your colleagues on NEA's discussion boards at **www.neatoday.org/talkback.html**.

HIS TWO CENTS

As an educator, longtime NEA member, and lifelong Republican, I feel compelled to speak about the editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* ("Teachers' Pets," January 3) on NEA's recent financial filing with the Department of Labor.

I was disappointed the paper did not state that groups such as the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, AIDS Walk, and Amnesty International received $5,000 each [from NEA], and instead said $65 million. While $5,000 might seem like too much to give an organization I don't identify with, there are 2.7 million NEA members. Some of them might feel it was money well spent. I noticed in the federal report that my state Association received more than $800,000 in NEA grants.

If it takes a leap of faith for a Republican to feel comfortable in an organization the paper calls an arm of the Democratic National Committee, I guess I've taken that leap. It's easy to take numbers, facts, and figures and make them appear as they may or may not be. Perhaps the *Journal* owes NEA and its rank and file members (liberal, conservative, Republicans, Democrats) an apology.

GARY GEE
Kansas City, Missouri

Editor's note: Want to know the real story about NEA's filing of its LM-2 Financial Report? Read the fact sheet at: www.nea.org/presscenter/lm2factsheet.html.

CORRECTION: *NEA Today* erred in reporting the city in which Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a city bus (Upfront, February) to a White man. The correct city is Montgomery, Alabama.

LET'S TALK

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

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JENNIFER BERRY, *Student Oklahoma Education Association member, crowned Miss America 2006, in response to pre-pageant questioning about "the most important issue facing our nation."*

Near the end of the televised pageant, Barry quipped about another priority: "I've been waiting for months to dip some French fries in some great ranch dressing, and I'm going to do it right away." Pageant organizers brought her a plate of the coveted snack during her post-competition news conference.

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Sky High Motivators

AS THE TESTING SEASON APPROACHES, SO DO (SOMETIMES WACKY!) EFFORTS TO MOTIVATE KIDS.

MANY DEVOTED TEACHERS spend long hours at school, sometimes leaving long after sunset. Not many, however, watch the sun rise too!

Yet that is exactly what a seventh-grade teaching team at Smart Intermediate School in Davenport, Iowa, did last year. Think tents, TV cameras, and stacks of take-out pizza. Sound like fun? It gets better: They actually spent the night on the roof of their three-story school!

This rather, er, unusual slumber party was meant to reward students for improved scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Teachers had promised kids that they'd endure the elements if scores went up by at least 5 percent. When math scores soared 16 percent, the educators started packing.

With the stakes so high, they're not the only educators going to great lengths to challenge, inspire, and reward students for academic gains, especially on test scores. Across the country, folks are kissing pigs, shaving heads, and doing whatever it takes to get students excited.

These tactics have their critics. Author Alfie Kohn writes that rewards devalue learning and eventually backfire as children inevitably lose interest in their work. Others say they don't much matter, compared to the actual teaching.

At Smart, most teachers say they aren't focused on the debate—they're just trying to make the testing season a little more fun. Said one: "We know it was a goofy thing to do, but we want people to recognize how great our students are!"

FEELING THE PINCH

As holiday bills continue to linger, you may not be surprised to hear this: Your salary isn't what it used to be. Average teacher salaries, which rose 2.3 percent to $47,808 last year, failed to keep pace with the nation's 3.1 percent increase in inflation, according to NEA research. Even worse, average teacher salaries actually declined in three states: Maine, West Virginia, and Alabama!

PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF JEFF CORMAN; PHOTO BOTTOM: PHOTODISC

Global Caring

Fourth-graders in Sharon Beattie's Swissvale, Pennsylvania, classroom have proven that caring can go a long way—all around the world, in fact.

FOR MORE THAN 10 years, Beattie's lessons at Dickson Intermediate School have offered insight into the lives of those less fortunate. Her students have collected school supplies for Haitian schools and have participated in the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), which promotes education as a basic right.

More than 100 million children worldwide don't have teachers. With that in mind, this year's theme for GCE's **Global Action Week, April 24–26,** is "Every Child Needs a Teacher," and lessons will focus on the dire need for more qualified teachers. As usual, Beattie will be participating—and she hopes others will too. For more information about Global Action Week and resources that can be used in lessons, visit www.campaignforeducation.org.

—MARY ROBBINS

[STATISTIC]

The number of **DAYS** in a **SCHOOL YEAR** proposed by the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.

SOURCE: MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL STAR-TRIBUNE

A Good Night's Sleep

LESS THAN EIGHT HOURS FOR STUDENTS CAN MAKE FOR NIGHTMARES IN SCHOOL

If your elementary or middle school students know who Conan O'Brien is, then they probably don't remember much about the founding fathers or other lessons, according to a new study from Brown University and Rhode Island's Bradley Hospital. Fewer than eight hours of shut-eye leads to trouble recalling old material, learning new lessons, completing high-quality work, and paying attention, teachers told researchers. With that in mind, researchers suggest that when evaluating kids for attention disorders or learning disabilities, you should find out how much sleep the child is getting.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: LAURA DESANTIS; PHOTO BOTTOM: IMAGE SOURCE

Notepad

More Funny Math

Here's a quick solution to classroom cash shortages: Cut spending for media centers, food service, bus drivers, nurses, guidance counselors, professional development, instructional support services, building maintenance, and so on. Sound good? It does to a group called First Class Education, which has called for all states to spend no less than 65 cents of every education dollar "in the classroom."

Called "the 65 percent solution," the idea—which assumes all districts have the same needs—could have drastic consequences. Currently, on average, 61.5 percent of state education money is spent on "classroom" expenses. Meeting the proposed standard likely would require laying off thousands of education support professionals, according to NEA analysts.

And yet, First Class Education's efforts, which are extremely well-funded, are taking hold. Governor Rick Perry of Texas has ordered the 65 percent solution to be law, and legislatures in Louisiana and Kansas have approved similar non-binding measures. Ballot questions are expected in a large number of states, including Arizona, Colorado, Florida, and Ohio.

For more information, go to www.neatoday.org.

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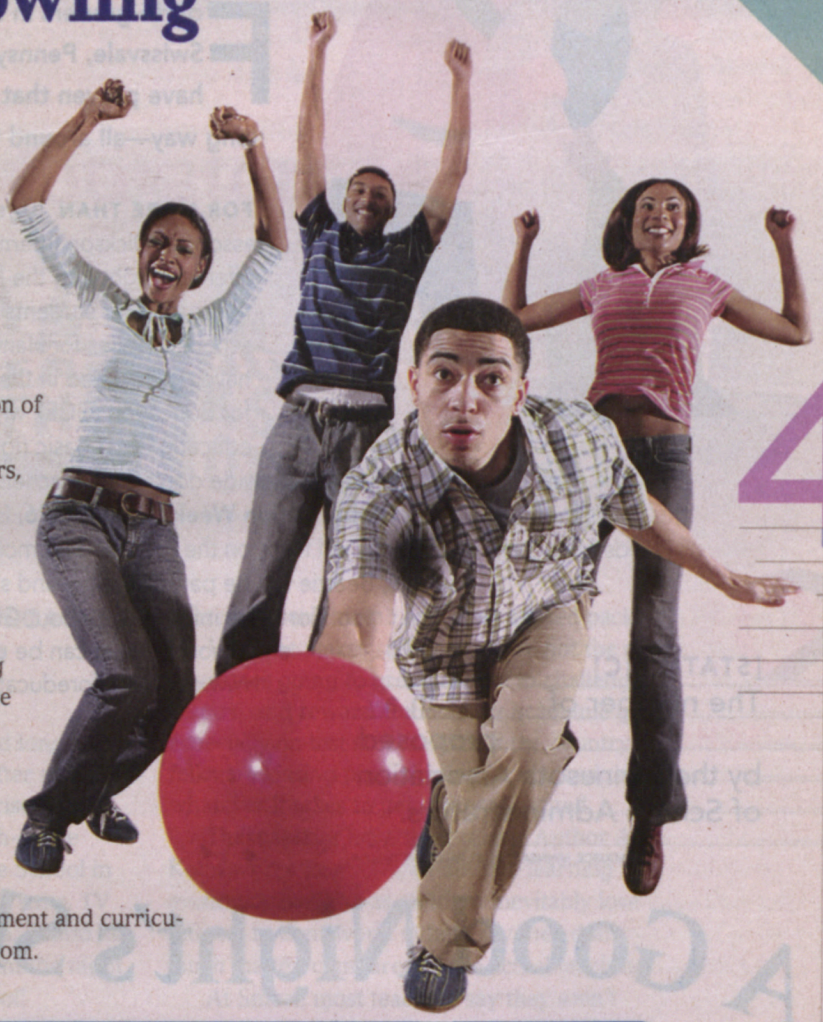
High School Bowling *On a Roll*

Make way for the new varsity athlete on high school campuses: the bowling alley big shot.



BOWLING BECAME THE FASTEST-GROWING sport last year, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations. Although football and basketball still rule, pulling in 1.4 million players, nearly 40,000 students bowled last year. Sixteen states had varsity squads, up from four in 1999.

Industry observers say bowling is experiencing an uptick in popularity, as movie and sports stars such as Will Smith and Kobe Bryant have been spotted pummeling the pins at glam bowling centers. Educators sing the sport's praises because it builds confidence, requires discipline, and can reach a broad range of students. And, as with other varsity sports, schools demand that student-athletes keep their grades up.

Think your students might like to try their hands at a 7-10 split? The Bowling Proprietors Association of America offers teachers free equipment and curriculum guidance. Find out more at www.bowlersed.com.

SUNNY DAYS

Hoping to boost test scores this spring? Take your students for a walk outside. A researcher from the Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics recently reported that exposure to sunshine in the springtime is related to better memory and other cognitive functions. The effect may have something to do with relief from winter weather, because the same link isn't found during sunny days in the summer or fall. So, put down the books and pull on those walking boots!

PHOTO TOP: DAVID STUART; PHOTO BOTTOM: MEDIOIMAGES

KICKING KELLY TO THE CURB

Santa Fe says no to the privatization of substitute teachers.

THE SAME COMPANY that introduced "Kelly Girls"—that 1960s fleet of office secretaries—took a stab at providing substitute teachers to Santa Fe Public Schools last year. That is, until NEA-New Mexico got that idea filed under B—for BAD!

In an unusual, but effective way to reach members, NEA-NM started a blog (or Weblog) at www.kellysubs.blogspot.com that helped organize protests, kept alive the privatization issue, and asked the key questions: "Who stands to gain?"

With $200,000 going to Kelly Services, it was obvious who gained. Who lost? The subs, making just $60 a day—and the teachers and students left rudderless when Kelly couldn't fill positions.

Thanks to NEA-NM's cyber efforts, Santa Fe Public Schools did not renew the Kelly contract. Using the Internet is "the kind of thing that tips the balance. Another tool—and a valuable one," said State Communications Director Marguerite Kearns.

3

[STATISTIC]
The percentage of **COLLEGE FACULTY** who are **PART-TIME**, up from 33 percent a decade ago.

SOURCE: CBSNEWS.COM

Ride with Pride

When a new K–8 school opened in Johnson City, New York, this year, replacing three neighborhood schools and requiring almost every student to ride the bus to get there, some students had an easy ride. For others, it was a frightening change. Sensing that those students needed support in this new adventure—and that bus drivers would appreciate a hand—the local employees' association saw an opportunity to step in and help.

With a grant from the National Education Association of New York, the Johnson City Employees Association (JCEA) suited up a "Ride with Pride" team that puts staff members on buses to sit with students and create a sense of community that begins at the bus stop and continues in class.

The students love it because they can connect with employees in a more informal setting, says JCEA President Sue Brazen-King. And the drivers appreciate the additional adult presence and the idea that they're working as part of a team.

Capitol Report

Where's the Money?

Two bills, passed by the House and Senate in late 2005, promise damaging cuts to public education, if passed by President Bush. In one, the education appropriations bill, Congress actually cut education funding for the first time in a decade. In the other, Congress set up a nationwide voucher bill. As a result of both, the federal share of special education funding will fall from 18.6 to 17.8 percent, or a total of $7 million. And, even as schools struggle to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind law, the bills also cut funding for NCLB by $1 billion. At the same time, the Senate eliminated $12.7 billion in student aid. "Today is a sad day for children and students," said NEA President Reg Weaver.

More Changes Afoot?

Senators approved a bill late last year that could dramatically change what happens in high schools. For the first time, the federal government would rate the academic rigor of high schools. The measure would provide financial grants to low-income students who have completed a "rigorous" program—but it'd be up to the U.S. Department of Education to decide what that means, which could include matters of high school curriculum.

Got a story to share?

> **Send it by mail:**
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ILLUSTRATION TOP: DON BISHOP; PHOTO BOTTOM: SW PRODUCTIONS

Calling All Collectors!

FRESH IDEAS FROM NEW TEACHERS

Take a look! I've got a Mickey Mantle in his Triple Crown year and—even better—a mint Cory Davidson player card! Who's Cory Davidson? Well, he's a rookie manager with a dynamite third-grade from Roosevelt Elementary in Bowman, North Dakota.

IT WAS DAVIDSON'S IDEA to create player cards for all of his third-graders as part of a reading unit on baseball. Each student submitted relevant stats: age, favorite books, even dream jobs. (Kristine: Hairstylist and veterinarian.) Using Microsoft Publisher, Davidson added photos and formatted them like the Topps originals, but laminated for durability.

"You can do a lot of adaptations with this—animals on the front, famous people, states, anything," says Davidson, now in his fourth year of teaching.

TRADE SECRETS

The skills you use on the job can help another member with a dilemma on the home front.

THIS MONTH: Head Custodian Sani Umar of the Gloucester Township School District in Camden County, New Jersey, provides simple steps for getting stains out of carpeting.

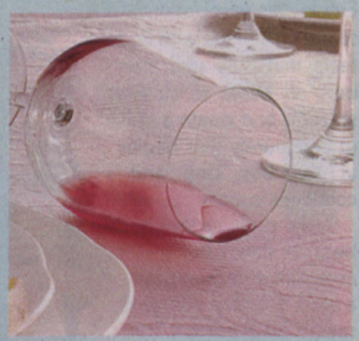
Stamp Out Stubborn Stains

Just like the cleaning of a school, the cleaning of a home literally begins at the front door. Keep dirt outside by using a good doormat. Doormats of proper length, texture, and pile, can reduce as much as 80 percent of the soil and grime that is tracked into your house. Vacuum high-traffic areas on a daily basis. This prevents dirt from accumulating and getting ground into carpets. If something should spill, clean the stain immediately—don't let it sit and set into the fiber. To clean a stain properly, first determine what type of stain it is.

RED WINE STAINS: Use white wine to neutralize the stain. Pour the white wine over the stain, and blot with a clean, dry towel until the stain is gone.

JUICE SPILLS: Pour carbonated club soda over the stain. The fizz of the carbonation will lift the stain out and the salt in the club soda will prevent the stain from setting in the carpet fiber. Then blot the area with a clean, dry towel.

COFFEE STAINS: Squirt shaving cream onto the stain and with a damp sponge lightly work the shaving cream into the fiber. Rinse with clean water and blot dry with a clean, dry towel.



GOT A TIP TO SHARE?

We're looking for a physical education teacher to help us get fit in time for summer. If you'd like to be considered, e-mail **clong@nea.org** with your name and local, a brief description of what you do, and your top three tips.

PHOTOS TOP: COREY DAVIDSON; PHOTO BOTTOM: IMAGE SOURCE

EYEBROW

MOVIE MANIA

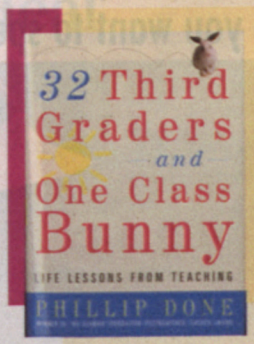
The envelope, please! Last month, your colleagues logged onto NEA's Web site and voted on the funniest, most inspiring, and just plain awesome portrayals of educators on the silver screen. Did Robin Williams win? Jack Black? Sidney Poitier? Grab some popcorn, turn on your laptop, and find out which films earned a gold star at www.neatoday.org.

[STATISTIC]

The number of STATES where teacher SALARIES rose faster than inflation last year.

SOURCE: NEA

BOOK FOCUS



Classroom Funnies

YOU MAY NOT KNOW Phillip Done, but you probably know someone just like him. He's the funny guy in every teacher's lounge—the one with the dangerous stories. (Why dangerous? Because coffee should not shoot through the nose!) In his book, *32 Third Graders and One Class Bunny* (Touchstone), Done draws on 20 years of public school experience to provide readers with life lessons from the classroom. "Why do kids forget to indent in a letter but remember the name of the guinea pig I had when I was in third grade? Why do kids write 'THE END' so big? Why do kids know precisely how many days, hours, and minutes are left until their birthdays, but still ask, 'When's lunch?'" Every word will be familiar. Many will touch your heart. More will grab your funny bone. (And at least one very important piece of advice will be shared: Be careful with your necktie near the laminating machine!)

Stage Right: NCLB

As lawsuits challenging the so-called No Child Left Behind law make their way through the federal courts, anti-NCLB activism has taken the stage—literally. In Connecticut, the same state that seeks to compel the federal government to cover the state's cost of complying with NCLB (and accuses the feds of acting in an "arbitrary and capricious" manner in denying waivers for flexibility), a theater ensemble has produced a critical play about the education law.

THE PLAY, "NEWS TO ME," produced by an independent, community theater group, seeks to show how the take-no-prisoners law affects students. In it, students are given the opportunity to create a TV program, and they use it to report on disparities in the law.

The curtain also hasn't set on the real-life judicial dramas surrounding NCLB. Although a federal judge in Michigan decided late last year to dismiss NEA's "unfunded mandate" suit, NEA President Reg Weaver has promised to appeal. In Connecticut, a separate lawsuit is still pending. Not surprisingly, the U.S. Department of Education has filed a motion to dismiss. Connecticut's State Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has said, "[Secretary Spellings'] argument defies common sense, fairness, and public policy—not to mention the law."

PHOTO BOTTOM: SIEDE PREIS

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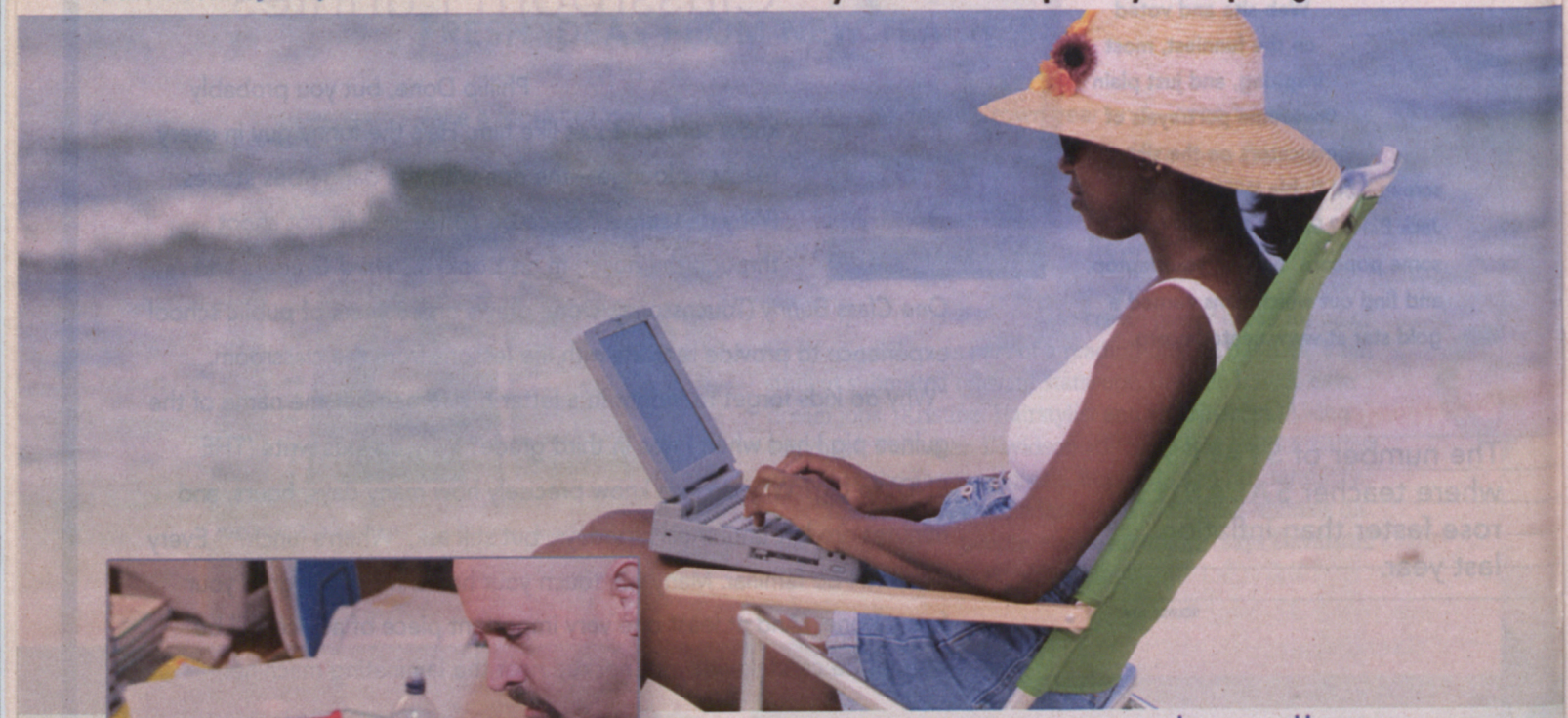
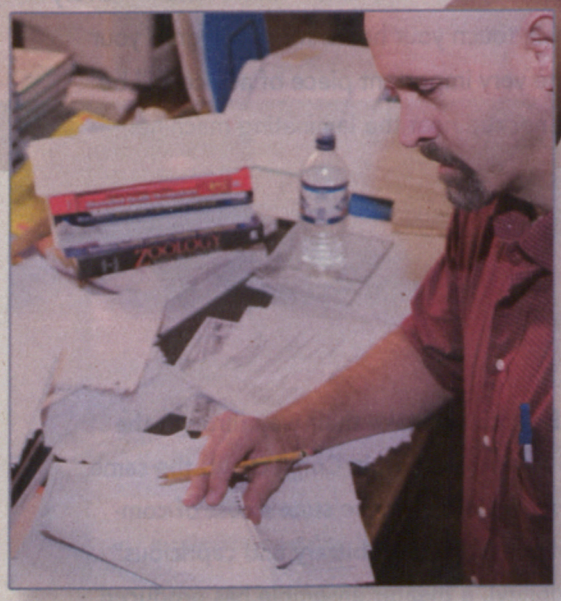
How do you want to spend your spring break?





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'A Chance To Heal'

A docudrama offers hope for hurricane survivors.

Even as they continue to rebuild their communities, Gulf Coast residents still struggle under the emotional toll of Hurricane Katrina. Some survivors are finding that the best way to dispel the trauma from the storm is to talk about it—to share their stories until the pain from the memory subsides. Sometimes an entire community needs to tell its story, not only to bring about healing, but also to create a living record of the disaster so its lessons don't fade with time.

(Left) An exhausted ER doctor treats a hurricane survivor in "The Katrina Project," directed by **Michael Marks** (above).

That was the idea behind a docudrama, co-written by NEA Executive Committee member and Hattiesburg High School drama teacher Michael Marks, about the Category 5 storm that devastated the Gulf Coast last summer.

"The impact that the storm had on our local community, state, and region dictated that we turn our talents to healing and providing documentation for this disaster," Marks says. "Mackenzie Westmoreland and I created 'The Katrina Project' for therapy's sake and for history's sake."

"The Katrina Project: Hell and High Water," a production of Hattiesburg High School Theatre, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, tells the story of the hurricane through a series of vignettes carefully pieced together to recall the buildup to the storm and the devastating aftermath.

A young Asian woman who speaks little English begs for a ride out of New Orleans as Hurricane Katrina bears down on the city. Another woman chooses to ride out the storm at home rather than on the interstate and is soon flooded out of her house. "I can still taste gasoline in the water," she says. After trying to restore order to a city in chaos, an exhausted and defeated New Orleans police officer gives up, shooting himself with his gun. "It's too much," he sobs, before pulling the trigger.

Similar to The Laramie Project—when a group of young actors and writers from a New York City theater company interviewed residents of Laramie, Wyoming, about the night gay college student Matthew Shepard was beaten and left for dead on a fence off a rural road—the student actors from Hattiesburg High School visited and interviewed survivors of Hurricane Katrina in the days following the storm. The play comprises their stories, performed by the students who gathered them.

With the help of the University of Southern Mississippi's Department of Oral History and Cultural Heritage, the students were trained on oral history interview techniques. The information they collected was not only used for the writing of the play, it will be housed in a permanent collection at Southern Mississippi.

"I've always said that theater should entertain, but that it has a deeper obligation to educate as well," Marks says. "This was a teachable moment that I could not pass up. For my students—many who suffered tragic personal losses—it was an opportunity to develop courage, grit, and determination as we became a lighthouse for schools south of Hattiesburg. We delivered food, consumable supplies, and provided cleanup services. For our community, it was a chance to heal."

Hattiesburg High School won the Mississippi Drama Championship with its production of "The Katrina Project: Hell and High Water," in the state finals held in January at Mississippi State University in Starkville. This month they will represent Mississippi at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Orlando.

—CINDY LONG

Delivering Help and Hope

NEA member Raphael Waldrop led the effort to create a relief distribution center at Hattiesburg High School, where goods continue to be collected and shipped to the Hurricane Katrina disaster zone. The distribution center has provided:

- **HUNDREDS OF** boxes of men's, women's, and children's clothing
- **DRY GOODS,** non-perishables, countless boxes of toiletries, and personal items
- **MORE THAN 500** backpacks with school supplies
- **THOUSANDS OF** books to restock libraries
- **MOSQUITO NETTING** for temporary, outdoor classrooms
- **VOUCHERS** for research materials and magazine subscriptions
- **FIRST AID KITS**

NEA Hurricane Relief Fund

So far, through the generosity of NEA members nationwide, NEA has raised more than $1.3 million for public school employees affected by the hurricanes. But there is still a need for help. To make a secure online donation, please visit **www.nea.org/disasterrelief/.**

PHOTO LEFT: JOEL BONNER

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Voucher Victory

Public education wins big time. Again.

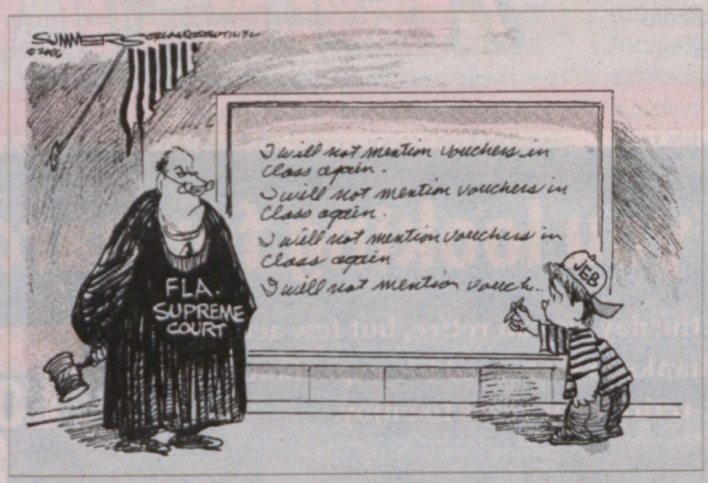
Vouchers are dead. At least in the state of Florida.

In a stunning rebuke to Governor Jeb Bush, the Florida Supreme Court ruled on January 5 that his highly touted voucher program for K–12 students violates the Florida Constitution.

"The Florida ruling is a clear win for students, parents, and public schools. It left no doubt that vouchers take resources, focus, and attention away from our neighborhood schools," stated NEA President Reg Weaver.

The Florida program had been the first and only statewide voucher scheme in the country. The court's vote was not close: 5–2, with two Bush appointees dissenting.

The Florida Supreme Court based its decision on the "education clause" of the state constitution, which requires the state to maintain a "uniform...system of free public schools."


I will not mention vouchers in class again.
I will not mention vouchers in class again.
I will not mention vouchers in class again.
I will not mention vouch..
FLA. SUPREME COURT
JEB

The voucher scheme, the court said, violates this provision in two different ways. First, it "diverts public dollars" to private schools, contrary to the requirement that the state fund only "public schools." Moreover, "because voucher payments reduce funding for the public education system," the voucher program "by its very nature undermines the system of 'high quality' free public schools" mandated by the constitution.

Significantly, the court also held that the program runs afoul of the "uniformity" requirement because private schools—unlike public schools—are not bound by state standards and are not subject to public oversight or accountability. While public school teachers, for example, must be college graduates with at least a 2.5 GPA, pass a rigorous state certification process, and submit to criminal background checks, private school teachers are exempt from such requirements.

Likewise, while Florida law imposes tough curriculum standards on the public schools, spells out specific subjects that must be taught, and requires the state to "hold schools accountable" for failure to comply, it explicitly denies to the state any power "to regulate, control, approve, or accredit private educational institutions."

"This court got it exactly right," said NEA General Counsel Bob Chanin, lead counsel in the protracted litigation. "Public schools have standards and accountability, but private schools don't. And because they don't, public money should not be used to fund them."

About 750 students used vouchers to attend some 47 private and religious schools in 2005–06. The court's order allows those students to complete the academic year in their current schools, after which the voucher program will be shut down.

Foes of public education have complained that the decision forces voucher students back into the "failing public schools." Appearing on CNN, Ron Meyer, general counsel of the Florida Education Association, responded that any student assigned to a poor performing public school has "the absolute right to transfer to a high performing public school.

"What we need to be doing," Meyer added, "is fixing the public schools. We don't need to be draining dollars away. There aren't enough dollars now."

This latest court victory comes on the heels of a 2004 ruling by the Colorado Supreme Court striking down that state's voucher scheme. In a lawsuit sponsored by NEA and the Colorado Education Association, the court declared that the program violated a provision of the Colorado Constitution guaranteeing "local control" of education.

By requiring Colorado school districts to channel part of their "locally-raised funds" to voucher schools, the program "stripped" local districts of their right to determine how to best educate their students, the court held.

The Florida case is now over. Because the court based its decision on the state constitution, there is no basis for an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The only way to overturn the decision would be by amending the Florida State Constitution, which most political observers deem highly unlikely.

Even though the decision is not a legally binding precedent in any other state, it still could be useful in challenging voucher programs that might be enacted elsewhere. That's because many state constitutions have education clauses containing language similar to Florida's, and the court's legal reasoning is quite persuasive.

But the court's opinion is also noteworthy for its eloquent paean to the value of education, quoting Thomas Jefferson—"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free...it expects what never was and never will be," as well as *Brown v. Board of Education*—"[Public education] is the very foundation of good citizenship."

The court's decision, *Bush v. Holmes*, is posted online at: www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/2006/sc04-2323.pdf.

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

PHOTO: ORLANDO SENTINEL

When Ramona Quimby says "D.E.A.R." on April 12, It's Time for ALL Families To Drop EVERYTHING and Read!

In honor of her creator Beverly Cleary's 90th birthday, Ramona is leading National Drop Everything and Read Day, a celebration to encourage families to bond with books.

Schools, libraries, bookstores and other organizations are holding D.E.A.R. events for families on April 12. Host or attend an event in your community or participate at home by reading for 30 minutes!

Request a free National D.E.A.R. Day Resource Kit at
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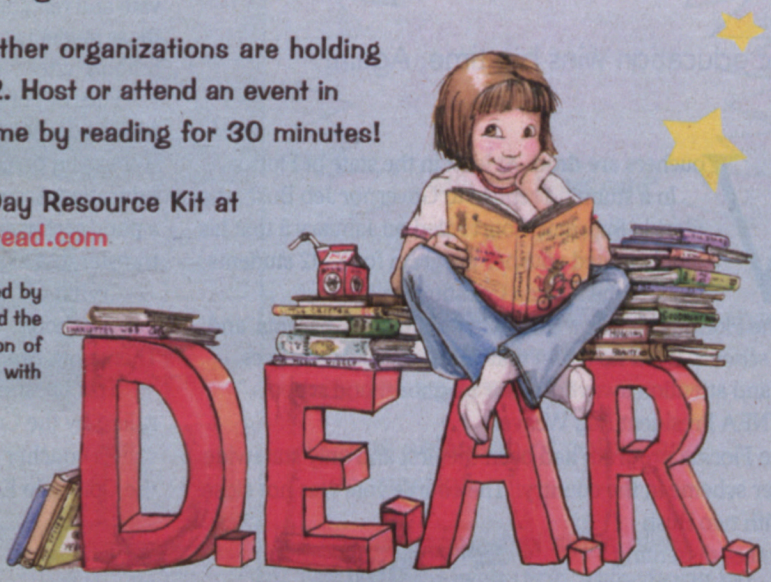
National Drop Everything and Read Day is sponsored by the National Education Association; National PTA; and the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association; in partnership with HarperCollins Children's Books.



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Most of us dream about the day we can retire, but few actually plan for the day after. Thanks to increased life expectancy, you could have 20 to 30 post-retirement years to enjoy.

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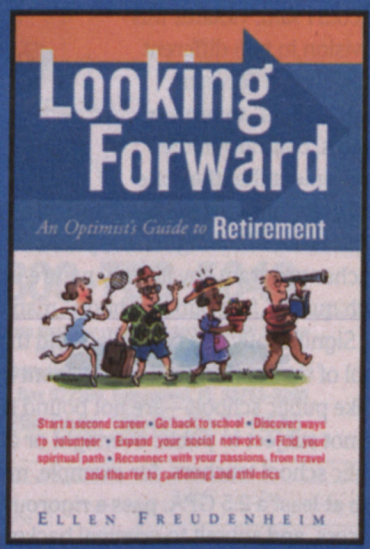
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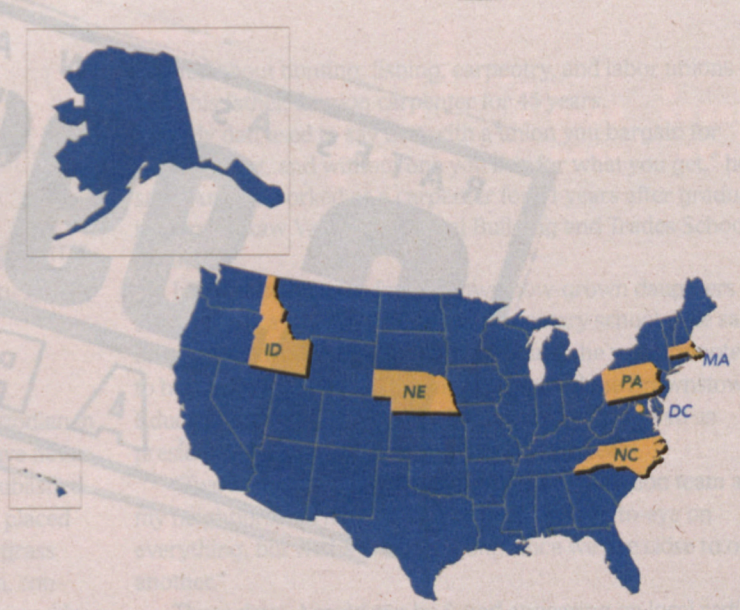


Arbitration Victory

PENNSYLVANIA In January 2004, two teachers from the Selinsgrove Area School District were fired by the superintendent after one sought reimbursement for college tuition costs. At that time, union officials discovered that both teachers had been working without a contract while being paid temporary wages without benefits. The superintendent maintained that since the teachers, hired in 2001 for the district's Alternative Education Program were not part of the bargaining unit, they were not entitled to receive the same negotiated salary and benefits as other teachers. This violated the contract. After arbitration efforts by the **Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)**, both teachers were reinstated with back pay and benefits. They were also reimbursed for tuition costs and other expenses.

Just a Penny

IDAHO The **Idaho Education Association (IEA)** has proposed a sales tax ballot initiative that would ask voters next fall to approve a sales tax increase by a penny on the dollar, raising it from 5 percent to 6 percent. IEA President Sherri Wood says the money raised would benefit Idaho's public and charter schools. About $190 million per year could be raised from the increase, which would go into effect in July 2007 if passed. While Idaho has the eighth highest class size in the nation, it ranks 45th in per pupil expenditure. IEA will need signatures from 6 percent of voters (47,881 minimum) to get the initiative on the ballot.

Above Average

NORTH CAROLINA The **North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE)** worked closely with Governor Mike Easley and his staff to develop a four-year plan that will pay North Carolina teachers a salary that is equal to or above the national average. The plan begins in 2008. Based on current estimates, the average salary for a North Carolina teacher will be $52,266 for the 2008–09 school year. Meanwhile, the recent state budget provided $85 million in a special salary provision to begin to address the pay disparity between educators in North Carolina and those in other parts of the country. This special provision, which began last November, provided a $750 across-the-board annualized increase for teachers and school-based administrators. Education support professionals received a $525 salary increase.

All in the (Union) Family

MASSACHUSETTS Almost 2,200 higher education members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 888 at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Boston, and Lowell recently voted to join the **Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)**. The vote came after MTA President Catherine Boudreau and SEIU International President Andrew Sternan reached an agreement. According to reports, Stern said SEIU 888 members would be better served by a union with a stronger focus on higher education. SEIU has about 1.8 million members in the United States and Canada who work primarily in the health, public, and property service industries.

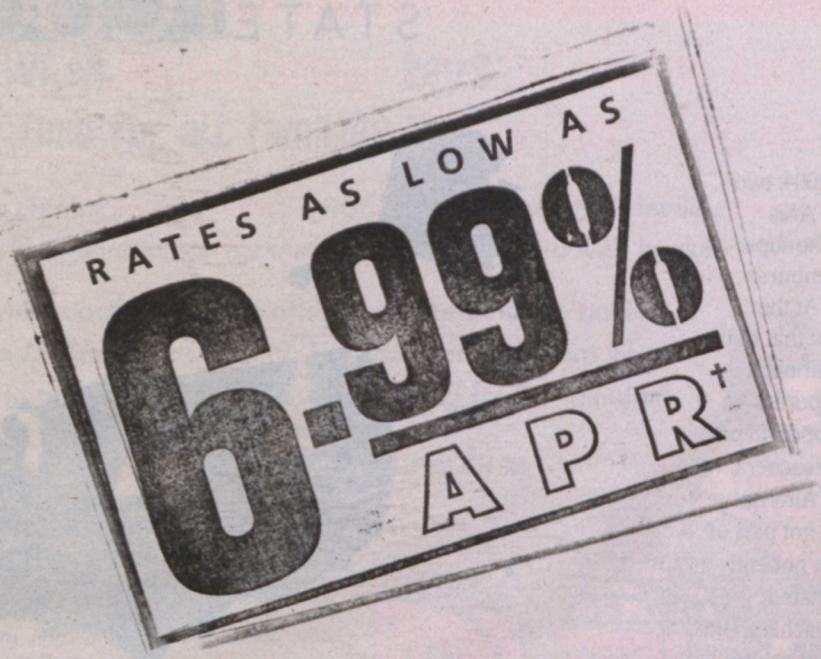
DC 'Should Be a Model'

WASHINGTON, D.C. Approximately 700 Washington teacher aides work in Title I programs for impoverished students. About half could lose their jobs in June for failing to meet certification requirements under the No Child Left Behind law. The school system launched its certification effort too late and with insufficient funds, says Leslie Richards, president of the **University of the District of Columbia Faculty Association/NEA (UDCFA)**. "This is the nation's capital," Richards says. "We should be a model for the nation." To meet NCLB's "highly qualified" provision, paraeducators must either have an associate's degree or two years of higher education or pass a test verifying their knowledge. While UDCFA does not bargain for teacher-aides, many of those entering the profession receive their training at UDC, where UDCFA is based. Teacher's aides are a pipeline to recruit teachers "from the local community who are often of the same color and culture of the students," Richards says.

Toward a Living Wage

NEBRASKA The **Neligh-Oakdale Education Association (NOEA)** won bargaining rights in December for the district's 27 education support professionals (ESPs). Nebraska ESPs work "at will." While only 15 of the district's 27 ESPs are NOEA members, a majority registered their vote in favor of gaining bargaining rights. The vote was taken by the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (NCIR), which handles public sector bargaining issues for public employees. "They will now move toward trying to gain a living wage," says Marlene Wehrbein, a UniServ director with the **Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA)**. "And as one group improves their compensation, there tends to be a domino effect across the state."

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC; IMAGE CONSTRUCTION: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.



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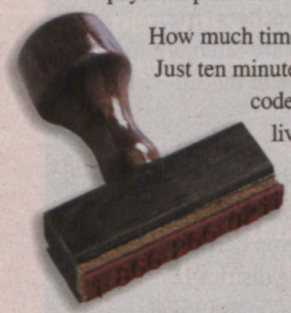

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$15,000	$694	$479	$371	$307	$265	$234
$25,000	N/A	$797	$618	$512	$441	$390

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The Quiet Leader

Dave Arnold can write columns, publish poems, and construct his own musket, but he's most proud of his work as an ESP.

Dave Arnold may be the most famous custodian in the United States whom most people have never heard of. This man for all seasons is a published poet (one of his poems, "Just a Janitor," placed fifth in a contest sponsored by Sparrowgrass Poetry Forum), accomplished carpenter, outdoorsman, contract negotiator, and poster designer. He also pens a biweekly column called "Dave's View" for nea.org.

"I was sitting in a conference meeting a while back and a guy got up and quoted something I had written in one of my editorials," says Arnold, a member of the Illinois Education Association (IEA) who has had more than 115 opinion pieces published on NEA's Web site. "The guy mentioned my name, but didn't know I was sitting right there. It was pretty funny."

Arnold says he never thought he'd be writing for a national audience. But when the education support professional (ESP) was invited to write for NEA in 2002, he jumped at the opportunity. "It was my hope to educate, inform, and maybe entertain," he says. "I try to convey to readers the importance of some of the issues that affect their jobs and lives."

Dave Arnold makes his own bullets for his handmade musket. "I have bullet molds," he explains. "I melt lead from old pipes and pour it into the mold."

Arnold also touches the lives of the 236 children who attend Brownstown Elementary School in Southern Illinois, where he is the head custodian.

"The kids love him at school because he reads to them, works on their science projects, and shares his knowledge of different subjects," says Marcus Albrecht, a UniServ director for IEA and acquaintance of Arnold for 10 years. "He is extremely well-rounded."

Albrecht recalls the day when Arnold showed him a Civil War-style musket he had made by hand from a piece of wood, some pipe, and a trigger mechanism. "It fires, so I mentioned the rifle to some Civil War enthusiasts," Albrecht says. "They re-enact battles and wanted to see this handmade musket."

When not hunting squirrel with his musket, Arnold uses a bow and arrow to track elk and deer. The avid outdoorsman learned about hunting, fishing, carpentry, and labor unions from his father, a union carpenter for 45 years.

"My dad used to say that with a union you bargain for what you get, and without one you beg for what you get," he says. Arnold worked as a carpenter for 11 years after graduating from Okaw Valley Vocational Building and Trades School in 1970.

In 1982 the married father of two now-grown daughters started work as a custodian at the elementary school—the same one he attended as a child. Eight years later, he was promoted to head custodian. In 1993, Arnold organized the Brownstown Education Support Professional Association. He served as president and head negotiator for almost six years.

"Two board members on the school's negotiation team are my neighbors," Arnold says. "We don't see eye-to-eye on everything, but we have to get along since we live close to one another."

These days, Arnold can be found appearing on local radio and television talk shows and speaking to civic groups on ESP issues, as well as teaching Sunday school. Each year, he designs a poster for the IEA to commemorate American Education Week. One poster, which was distributed statewide, featured a black-and-white photograph of a forlorn-looking man sitting alone in a jail cell. The caption reads: "Some Places Don't Require a Good Education." This dedicated ESP does his part to ensure that his students don't meet such a fate. As he writes in his poem, "Just a Janitor":

I play just a small part in this education plan
When trying to help a child become a successful woman or man
I hope I might live to see the day
That a doctor, lawyer or business person will say
"Thank you for helping me down life's road way back when."
Believing that makes me thank God for the privilege to face another day again.

"Dave's View" can be found at www.nea.org. Click on "Support Professionals," then "NEA Voices."

—JOHN ROSALES

More ESP stories in this issue:

- Bus drivers get a helping hand from colleagues – *Page 13*
- Nebraska ESPs win bargaining rights – *Page 21*
- Coming next month: ESP reservists who served in Iraq

PHOTO: ERIC WILLIAMS

Ready To Upgra

Untangling technology can be a daunting proposition. We download it all and figure out what you really need to know for your classroom.

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

The thought of integrating technology into her class overwhelmed **June Colley,** until she got training and saw the wealth of possibilities.

See if you and June Colley have anything in common: She's a highly skilled educator who works every day to keep her students engaged and performing at their academic peak. Her students' admiration is readily evident and is reflected back to them in her sunny classroom manner. And yet when it came to learning how to use advanced technology and integrate it into her instruction, the Creswell, Oregon, elementary teacher—typically a model of calm, cool, and collected—was terrified.

"I was overwhelmed," Colley says, her eyes widening and mouth forming a silent, theatrical shriek. "I was thinking, 'There's no way I'm going to be able to learn it and then get my second-graders to use it.'"

But those thoughts occupied her two years ago, and a lot has changed since then—perhaps with you too. Teachers are more receptive than ever to the idea of adding a healthy dose of "gee whiz" to their instruction to enhance its appeal and effectiveness.

Still, "some portray teachers as techno-phobes," says Barbara Stein of NEA External Partnerships and Advocacy. "That is definitely not the case." To the contrary, NEA polling as far back as 1995 found that most teachers were already using computers both at home and at school. In a survey last year of 1,000 K–12 teachers nationwide, a whopping 80 percent said they consider themselves at least somewhat advanced computer and software users.

But two things temper all the good news about educators' increased techno-literacy. First, today's great gadget can be tomorrow's Atari 500, and with all the demands put on teachers, it can be hard to stay current. "I like to work with technology," says Vicki Vannier, a high school teacher in Bartlett, Nebraska, "but I don't have enough time in the day to keep up with everything that has been released." Second, it's not beefed-up professional development courses that are boosting teachers' computer confidence, it's often their own efforts: Seventy percent say they get eight hours or fewer of training in the entire year.

Many school systems have been slow to help teachers standardize instructional technology and glean the most benefit for their students. And it's not just about learning to automate the morning attendance, Stein says, but about making fundamental

changes in pedagogy. "A vast gap exists between the degree to which industry has prepared its employees for productive technology use and that to which public education has prepared its employees," she says.

What are some reasonable technology-use goals for today's teachers? Administratively, they should have the training and tools necessary to electronically track grades and attendance, post homework, and e-mail parents and administrators, notes Kathy Schrock, a former teacher turned instructional technology administrator for the Nauset Public Schools in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Instructionally, teachers should feel comfortable replacing overheads with multimedia presentations; creating digital worksheets for students; finding and identifying online sites for students; using LCD projectors and electronic whiteboards, and moving large files back and forth between school and home.

A mushrooming array of tech tools presents even greater challenges to educators beyond just learning how to use them, says technology analyst Don Blake of NEA Quality School Systems. "A teacher may feel comfortable with a computer, but using it to manage authentic, simulated instruction demands a completely different level of technology literacy," he says.

GIVE THEM A HAND(HELD)

Fortunately, some school districts are finding ways to get teachers the training and tools they and their students need to compete in today's digital world. Enter Lynn Lary, an instructional technology specialist and NEA member administrator in Eugene, Oregon, who regularly packs up her years of teaching experience and hits the road, traveling around the state to help teachers in Lane County's 133 public schools learn what's out there and how to welcome it into their classrooms.

It was a federal grant that brought Lary and about 20 crates of handheld computers to Creswell, Oregon, in 2004. That's where June Colley learned to use handhelds (also called PDAs, for "personal digital assistants") and to

THE ELEMENTARY TEACHER

She knows little ones are eager to get their hands on a computer, but they can get easily frustrated, so she focuses on simple, age-appropriate technology integration.

FAVORITE WEB SITE: http://Mikids.com. Lessons by grade (K–5) in a variety of subjects. First-graders can click and drag antonyms in one section, while older students can participate in an interactive lesson on constitutional rights in another.

BEST GADGET: Digital camera. Have students take photos of flora and fauna on campus. Then download the images and let them label them for a scrapbook.

PHOTO ABOVE: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER; RIGHT: NATHAN HAM

guide her second-graders at Creswell Elementary School through an extensive catalog of programs available on the devices. Math, spelling, reading, and writing comprehension were no longer relegated to textbooks, photocopied worksheets, or the board. With the click of a silver stylus against the small computer screen, her students whiz quietly through exercise after exercise. Colley walks through the classroom offering students encouragement, helping them when they get stuck, and expanding on a lesson point on the whiteboard when needed. Barely a peep that isn't related to the lesson emerges from the students, fidgeting is at a minimum, and nobody requests a bathroom break.

Down the road at Creswell Middle School, Jill Murray, a veteran teacher and self-described technology "dinosaur," also learned from Lary how to maximize class lessons with handhelds. Like Colley, she worried about the first day, when it was just her and her freshly acquired skills facing a class of pre-teens immersed since toddlerhood in computer games, videos, and more. Her approach to conquering her anxiety? Embrace her students' ability. "I don't put those barriers up in my classroom," Murray says. "I learn from the kids." As her confidence in her technological teaching grows, so too does her students' confidence in their learning progress. She references a common compliment that teachers who embrace handhelds, laptops, and game show-style answering devices in the classroom have paid their students: "They're feeling better about themselves because they get instant, confidential feedback."

Her students' results shuttle directly from the devices they're using into progress folders, which she can access. Technology in the classroom is also helping some students shed their writer's block. "Before on writing exercises, I would be lucky to get two or three sentences," Murray says. "Now, using the keyboards, they'll type paragraphs."

Creswell Middle School math teacher Ron Armstrong was stunned to find that giving kids handhelds actually made them want to spend more time on math problems. When his students first got the devices, he let them work on problems for the first five minutes of class while he took attendance—but that wasn't enough. Now students show up to class 15 minutes early just to practice their math exercises. "They're interested, and they're motivated," Armstrong stresses.

OVERCOMING THE FEAR FACTOR

While some teachers are early adapters of everything electronic, others are hesitant. In fact, *where* a teacher works can affect his or her comfort level with computers, according to a survey by NetDay, a nonprofit group working to help teachers meet educational goals through the use of technology. The survey found that urban teachers tend to be more comfortable using computers—65 percent are very comfortable, compared with 54 percent of suburban teachers and of rural teachers. NEA believes that given the fast pace of change in public schools, meaningful staff development, especially in the area of technology, must be a priority in all schools, even in the smallest of communities.

Once educators are exposed to new technology, they want to learn as much as possible, says **Lynn Lary** (right), an NEA member who trains colleagues like Oregon support professional Michelle Brown.

How-to Sites >

Get the skinny on popular tech tools:

LEARN HOW TO USE A DIGITAL CAMERA at Going Digital in the Classroom, www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/sbeck/digital/goingdigital.htm. It'll guide you through the process, step-by-step, with pictures. Then click over to http://Drscavanaugh.org to learn how to use that digital camera in all types of classes, from math to ELL.

LEARN HOW TO SAVE INTERNET SITES AND DOWNLOAD DIGITAL MEDIA, such as pictures and video clips, at http://k-12.pisd.edu/retrieve.htm.

LEARN HOW TO OPERATE A DATA PROJECTOR (bye-bye bulky, boring overhead!) at http://members.ozemail.com.au/~leemshs/project.htm. The projector picks up a signal from a computer, TV, or video source and projects a large, clear image onto a screen or wall. It's a great way to show students charts, images, animation, audio, or video.

Make Life Easier Sites >

Great tools for getting organized, maintaining records, communicating with students and parents, and more:

WWW.NEA.ORG—Head here for the Teacher Toolkit, an online suite of classroom, IEP, curriculum, and professional development tools. Class roster, attendance and behavior logs, IEP reports, and instructional resources are just a few of the goodies included in the free, basic tool kit. An advanced tool kit offers more for a small fee.

WWW.EBOARD.COM—If your district doesn't provide one, this is a simple way to create your own Web site for a nominal annual fee. Use it to post homework assignments, test schedules and grading policies, and exchange messages with parents and students. (K–12)

WWW.37SIGNALS.COM—Offers individualized and diversified instruction, message boards, to-do lists, collaborative writing boards, and the ability to upload assignments. (K–12)

WWW.4TEACHERS.ORG—Offers free online tools and resources. Find or create ready-to-use Web lessons, quizzes, rubrics, and classroom calendars. Helpful professional development resources address issues such as equity, ELL, technology planning, and at-risk or special-needs students.

LEARN HOW TO VIDEOCONFERENCE at http://members.ozemail.com.au/~leemshs/vidconf.htm, or www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/vidconf/intro.html. Both sites offer instruction on how to use the technology, what equipment is needed, and the benefits—such as allowing students to interact with peers, tutors, and experts from around the world.

LEARN HOW TO USE A SMARTBOARD at www.kenton.k12.ky.us/SmartBoard/smartboardindex.htm. Lesson plans tailored to this interactive tool can be found at http://education.smarttech.com/ste/en-US/Ed+Resource/Lesson+Activities/Notebook+Activities/default.htm.

LEARN HOW A DIGITAL MICROSCOPE WORKS at http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/optics/intelplay/intelanatomy.html. The "Student Activities" link suggests ways to incorporate the microscope into your science lessons.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

QUICK BYTES

He knows that attention spans are at a premium for tweens, and bringing a little "gee whiz" into the classroom can go a long way.

FAVORITE WEB SITE: Learn about all things oceanographic at **www.seasky.org/links/sealink.html.** Students can follow the site's voluminous links to explore shipwrecks, marine life (listen to the humpback whale!), and current marine conservation efforts.
BEST GADGET: "Gameshow" clickers (official name: **interactive wireless response pads**) let students answer questions by clicking the remote-control-like device. You'll know instantly whether they "get it."

PHOTO ABOVE AND UPPER LEFT: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER

That's why, one day this past winter, tech specialist Lynn Lary got into her car and headed for Riddle, Oregon (population: 1,017), located 90 minutes south of Eugene. A winding highway took her through the state's fog-shrouded peaks and valleys and deposited her in a timber-mining town so small that the topic of teachers having the day off for technology training was on the morning's gossip agenda at Riddle Pharmacy on Main Street. But thanks to the same grant that brought Lary to the Creswell School District, the teachers in this rural area also have access to the latest instructional tools.

"There's a direct correlation between the technology teachers have in the classroom and the technology teachers use," says Lary. "Those who have gotten things like a laptop, a document projector, or digital camera—as soon as they get them, they start using them as a resource."

Some educators are intimidated by new technology—no matter where they live—simply because of a lack of exposure. Laura Feld, a teacher in Hopkins, Minnesota, freely admits to her angst. "I am a techno-terror!" Feld exclaims. "Perfectly normal machines do strange things when I use them. I know the programs or Web sites that would be great for my students, but I don't know how to fix uncooperative machines."

In some cases, but certainly not all, the divide between teachers anxious to bring technology into their curriculum and those just anxious about it is broken down along age lines.

"We tend to teach how we learned," says Eric Jefcoat, a computer literacy teacher in Fort Collins, Colorado. He notes that more and more teachers fresh out of colleges of education "don't consider technology integration a big deal because they've grown up with it, come out of college learning it, and it's just more natural to them."

Still, there are plenty of intrepid veteran teachers open to trying their hand at something new. A few years back, one late-career teacher told Lynn Lary that she had no use for technology in her classroom. Then the woman's daughter moved overseas. Soon, she was mastering e-mail and digital photography, and before long her elementary school students were producing digital slideshows.

"Someone who is just not using technology much personally is not going to jump in and use it in a way that's going to transform student learning," says Jefcoat. "They need to be encouraged to dip their toes into the pool."

ACQUIRING TECH: BEST PRACTICES

As with any professional development effort, the strongest program is one that puts heavy emphasis on teachers' input. "In some districts, someone high up makes the decision and all of a sudden every seventh-grader has a laptop, whether or not that's the most effective use of technology dollars," notes instructional technology administrator Kathy Schrock. Instead, teachers should have an active voice in the process and be empowered to research new technologies and write small grant proposals seeking funding for

Integrate Technology with Curriculum Sites >

Capture students' attention and enhance learning with tech-based activities and materials:

WWW.INTERNET4CLASSROOMS.COM—Provides a rich library of sites for teachers and students. The four areas targeting instructors include Assessment Assistance (grade-by-grade practice tests), Links for K–12 Teachers, Daily Dose of the Web, and On-Line Practice Modules, providing tutorials on Microsoft PowerPoint, Excel, and more. (K–12)

WWW.TEACHER.SCHOLASTIC.COM/ACTIVITIES—Get students excited about history, reading, writing, science, and math with engaging Web-based activities that support cross-curricular

With little or no professional development, educators often must teach themselves new technology. Colorado teacher **Eric Jefcoat** learned podcasting during a break.

learning. Teacher guides help you integrate activities into lesson plans and offer extensions for offline enrichment. Think your students would like to interview Ben Franklin or oversee a world hunger eradication campaign? Check it out here. (K–12)

WWW.LITERACYNET.ORG/CNNSF/ARCHIVES.HTML—Fantastic resource for struggling readers. The content consists of current and past news stories on topics such as the environment, politics, science, culture, and adventure. Students may choose to read the text, listen to the text, or view a short video clip of the story. Each module includes interactive activities to test vocabulary and comprehension. (MS, HS)

WWW.APLUSMATH.COM—Developed to help students improve their math skills. Students can view step-by-step video explanations from teachers and use digital flashcards and worksheets. The Homework Helper lets them check their solutions. (K–5)

WWW.KIDSCLICK.ORG—A vast compendium of resources for students to research any topic, similar to a card catalog on the Web. One example: Click on "encyclopedias" and you'll get the links and descriptions for eight reputable resources. A project of the Ramapo Catskill Library System. (MS)

WWW.FREEPLAYMUSIC.COM—Resource for instrumental music for classroom projects. Compositions are organized by category, style, and even the "feeling" that you want to evoke. If used at school, Freeplay's recordings may be broadcast, synchronized, and copied for free. (K–12)

WWW.SHODOR.ORG—Interactive math activities (organized by grade and subject matter) teach both basic and advanced math concepts, provide practice problems, and allow students to explore and visualize abstract math concepts. The National Library of Virtual Manipulatives at http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html provides similar content. (K–12)

WWW.DIGITALHISTORY.UH.EDU/—provides supplemental materials for teaching American history, including an online textbook, classroom handouts, lesson plans, historical maps, and tools for creating multimedia American history exhibitions. (MS, HS)

WWW.BOOKHIVE.ORG—Compiled by librarians in Charlotte, North Carolina, this searchable site contains recommended book reviews at a variety of reading levels and interest areas. Little ones can also get in on the act, by writing and illustrating their own storybook on the site. (preK–6).

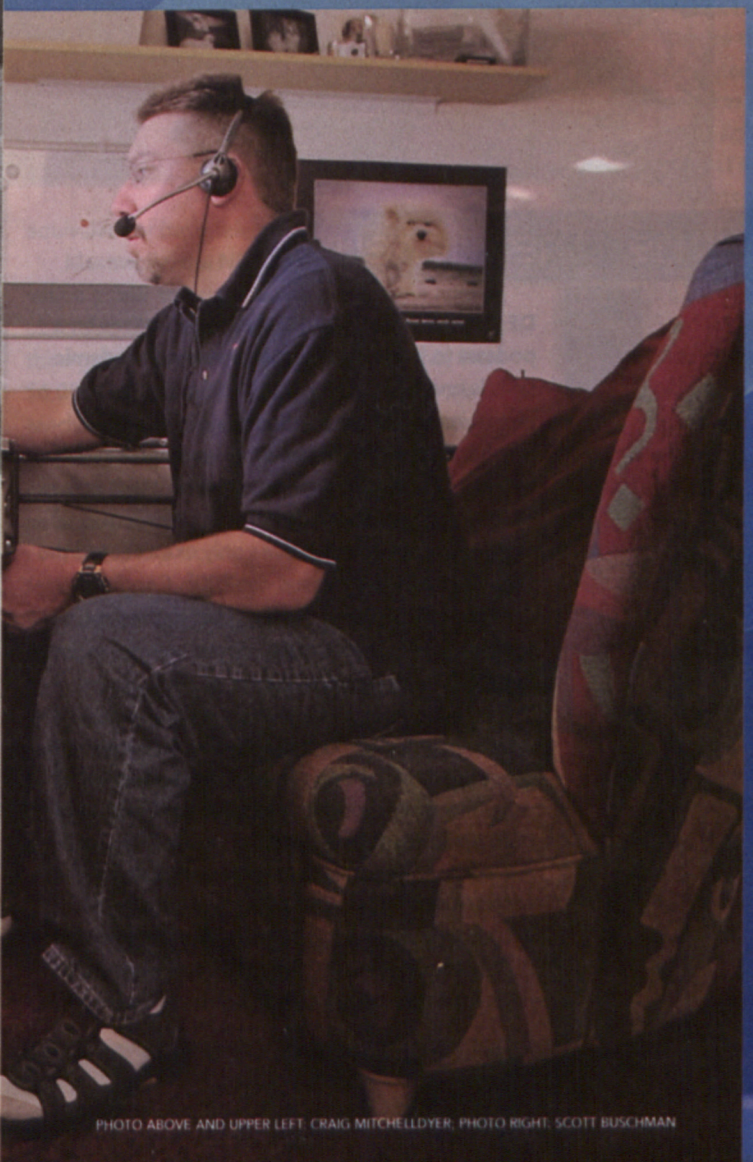


PHOTO ABOVE AND UPPER LEFT: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER; PHOTO RIGHT: SCOTT BUSCHMAN

THE HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

QUICK BYTES

He needs to find ways to convert his "been there, done that" students' comfort with technology into classroom energy.

FAVORITE WEB SITE:
www.eduscapes.com/geocaching/kids.htm has everything a teacher needs to know about geocaching, a type of scavenger hunt that uses global positioning, latitude, and longitude.
BEST GADGET USE: Podcasting. Students download and listen to podcasts on their iPods. How about recording some extra musings on the day's lesson in your own podcast that they can tune into at home?

pilot programs. "If that person likes it, then they can make the case to others," she says. "They can spread the word: good, bad, or ugly."

Technology committees with a strong teacher presence are another great way to evaluate the suitability of a new gadget or software and what its useful lifespan might be. "Teachers are in an excellent position to determine if it's the thing of the day and will be the thing of tomorrow," Schrock says.

Of course, having the gadgets without the training to use them is a no-win proposition. The most effective training programs offer educators multiple sessions and conferences and provide sample lesson plans that integrate technology into curriculum, hands-on learning opportunities, and access to helpful instructional Web sites. In places like Creswell and Riddle, teachers are paid to attend at least two daylong training sessions each year, and grant money pays for substitutes to work in their classrooms. With the availability of online training and videoconferencing, even cash-strapped districts (and which ones aren't?) can offer their teachers access to development instruction.

For most teachers, the opportunity to stay current with the rapidly changing technology around them is exciting and motivating. Even those who find the process a bit daunting say that the chance to engage their students and bring them up to the next level academically is too enticing to let nerves deter them. Even a little bit of technical knowledge allows educators to use technology as the hook to help them better relate to students.

Eric Jefcoat found that his students were suddenly more keenly interested when he started recording podcasts of his classroom lessons and related tutorials for students to use during class or at home. Ditto for teachers who lead students in creative writing exercises using blogs, or who take their students on a thrilling aerial tour of the Grand Canyon using Google Earth software.

"As a teacher, hopefully your number one priority is to inspire your students to become lifelong learners," says Lynn Lary. "These new technologies are a powerful way to do that." nea

Educators in Riddle, Oregon, get time off to attend daylong workshops where they hone their skills.

Find Me the Money >

DECIDING TO RECORD classroom lessons on a podcast to boost students' interest and academic skills is one thing. Getting the computer, microphone, and software needed to do it is quite another. Lack of funds can be as common a pitfall as lack of professional development when it comes to integrating technology into the classroom.

Unfortunately, lawmakers only exacerbated the problem when they closed out 2005. Congress finalized a $602 billion budget that slashed funding for several education technology programs, including a $221 million cut to the Enhancing Education Through Technology state block-grant program.

Quality education technology must be part of a great public education system, and the federal government and states should be funding it, says Barbara Stein, of NEA External Partnerships and Advocacy. While ambitious teachers are to be commended for hunting down grant money for integrating technology into teaching, they shouldn't have to, Stein says. "Something as essential as education technology should not be subject to the

On the Web!

Head to www.neatoday.org for more ways to brush up on new technology and how that can translate to the classroom.

DOWNLOAD easy-to-follow instructions for tackling digital cameras, searching effectively on the Web, and more.

BROWSE an expanded Gigabyte Glossary. We lay out all the lingo you need to sound like a pro.

VISIT more links for Web sites that help you organize your (many!) tasks and pull the Web's vast network into your teaching.

CLICK through our "Technophile or Technophobe?" quiz to test your prowess in all things digital.

TELL US about your favorite Web sites and share the tech tips you can't live without in our feedback section!

PHOTO LEFT: STOCKDISC

equivalent of bake sales," she says.

Meanwhile, the NEA Foundation supplies innovation grants to help educators overcome funding obstacles. One example: Last year, Nancy Mueller, a third-grade teacher in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, won $6,000 from the NEA Foundation for her work teaching her colleagues about technology integration and for engaging her own students with digital cameras and computers, then leading them on a polar dog-sledding expedition...via the Internet.

NEA is also working to restore federal funding for education technology through initiatives such as the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. This national advocacy organization, chaired by NEA Executive Director John Wilson, encourages schools, districts, and states to infuse technology into education and provides tools and resources to facilitate that effort.

WANT TO FIND OUT how NEA and its partners are working to bring technology into your classroom? For updates and grant information, visit www.neafoundation.org (click on "Grants"), www.technologygrantnews.com (click on "Grants Index"), and www.21stcenturyskills.org.

Gigabyte Glossary

Your crib sheet to the latest tech lingo.

APPLET n. Small computer program included in a Web page to perform a simple, specific task. Example: An ad for a movie plays when you click on a Web site.

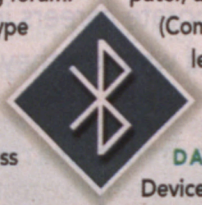
BEAMING v. Transfer of data from one PDA to another using infrared light. Students in some classrooms beam questions or writing samples to each other during collaborative work sessions.

BLOG n., v. Online publishing forum. Most "bloggers" use it as a type of online journal, to which they may add photos and sound or video clips.

BLUETOOTH n. Short wireless connection that links mobile phones, computers, and handheld devices to one another or links a wireless keyboard to a monitor. Why you care: Eliminates long phone wires and shares information between gadgets.

DIGITAL CAMERA n. Electronic device that digitizes images. Does not require film or film development, making it a handy tool for classrooms.

DATA STORAGE DEVICE n. These handy, inexpensive tools—which can be as small as a key chain—plug into a slot (called a USB port) on the side of your computer, allowing backup of all files. (Computer crashes? No problem!) The gadget can also be used to move files from one computer to another.



DATA PROJECTOR n. Device that takes a signal from a computer, TV, or video source and produces a large image using projected light.

FTP SITES n. Short for "file transfer protocol," it's a method on the Internet for exchanging files. Example: An entire textbook could be loaded onto a host FTP site. Students could then access it from their computers at home by logging onto the site and entering a password.

INSTANT MESSAGING, OR IMing v. Communicating electronically and immediately with one or more users who are online simultaneously. Typically, the instant messaging system alerts you whenever somebody on your private "buddy" list is online.

IPOD n. A portable digital audio player (also called a handheld media player) designed and marketed by Apple Computer that stores data, such as songs or video, on a built-in hard drive. See also, podcast.

MULTITASKING v. Typically what you do on daily as you teach and manage your classroom, but in this case we're talking techno-multitasking. It's combining two or more devices into a single product, such as the new digital still camera that also acts as a Webcam and camera for videoconferencing.

PDA n. Also called a "handheld" or "personal digital assistant," this palm-sized data storage device lets users store electronic calendars, contact lists, memos, and more. Also used in classrooms with software that lets kids solve math problems, write, etc.

PODCAST n. A file, usually audio, published on the Internet, available for people to download and listen to, similar to an on-demand radio program. Gets its name from iPod, which many people use to listen to audio programs.

SMARTBOARD n. Forget chalkboards, this interactive board lets users project a Web site onto its surface, then click through the site by tapping the board. Also called an electronic whiteboard.

SPAM, SPIM, SPIT n. Unsolicited e-mail, voice mail, and instant messages. v. To send such messages.

STYLUS n. A pen-like pointing device used to click through screens and enter data in a PDA.

TEXT MESSAGING v. Sending short messages to a cell phone, pager, PDA, or other handheld device. Typically, text messages are fewer than 200 characters in length.

VIDEOCONFERENCING v. Interactive communication, made possible using video and sound, that's transmitted over telephone lines in real time.

WEBCAST n. Delivery of live or delayed sound or video broadcasts using Web technologies. Sound or video is captured by conventional video or audio systems, then digitized and sent to computers on a Web server.

PHOTO ABOVE AND UPPER LEFT: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER; CAMERA: STOCKDISC; SMARTBOARD: SCOTT SUCHMAN

SWAPPING THE BOARDROOM FOR THE CLASSROOM

Thousands of adults are chucking corporate careers in favor of teaching. What's driving them to the classroom, and what do they find once they arrive?

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

A few years ago, Jada Overton spent two hours each morning inching her car around the clogged Washington, D.C., beltway with other commuters, heading toward the telecommunications company where she would work a 12-hour day as a direct mail marketing manager.

"Miserable," Overton says of her corporate rat race days, consumed by meetings, mergers, and memos. On a more recent morning, she prepared for another meeting, but this was one she eagerly anticipated. Eight fourth-graders were about to arrive at their school in Lakewood, New Jersey, and they were counting on their new teacher—Overton—to help them practice their vocabulary and comprehension techniques in her reading skills class.

Thoughts of switching to teaching—her mother's profession—had long nagged at Overton. After the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, she had had enough.

"I think a lot of people started thinking about what they were doing with their lives," she says. "I know I did."

One 60-percent pay cut and a year later, Overton arrived at Clifton Avenue Grade School as a basic skills teacher, "to try to give back to younger people. I wanted to feel like I was needed." After taking eight hours of classes after school each week for a year, she earned certification to teach elementary school through New Jersey's alternative licensing process. Now she is a full-time teacher.

In the past five years, nearly 17,000 career-changers like Overton have obtained teaching certification after leaving professions that had nothing to do with education, according to a recent survey by the National Center for Education Information. And, like their more experienced counterparts, members of this new breed of teachers say they are motivated by a strong desire to help children.

GETTING CERTIFIED

The alternative routes today's career-switchers take—which range from comprehensive programs with extensive clinical practice requirements in some states to Internet-based testing-only programs in others—offer individuals with college degrees a chance to become certified by meeting state requirements. Teachers are typically able to work as classroom assistants while they obtain certification. Almost half of those surveyed said they wouldn't have become teachers if alternate routes didn't exist. Forty-seven states offer 538 such programs.

The popularity of this path to education isn't likely to fade, especially as school systems grapple with a projected need for 400,000 new teachers in the next eight years. But it has also given rise to a greater need to monitor and support those teachers as they enter classrooms, says Donald Washington, of NEA Teacher Quality.

Ken Slavick's first year of teaching was intense.

While NEA is not opposed to alternative routes, one concern revolves around the rigor of some of the programs. The Association strongly opposes licensing based solely on testing.

Ensuring that alternative route teachers are qualified means establishing that they have extensive clinical practice; demonstrated knowledge of their subject, child development, and pedagogy; and meet every state standard, notes Washington. Interviews and observation, along with testing, offer a better gauge than testing alone. "Those who are more fully prepared with high-quality alternative certification are more likely to stay in teaching," he says.

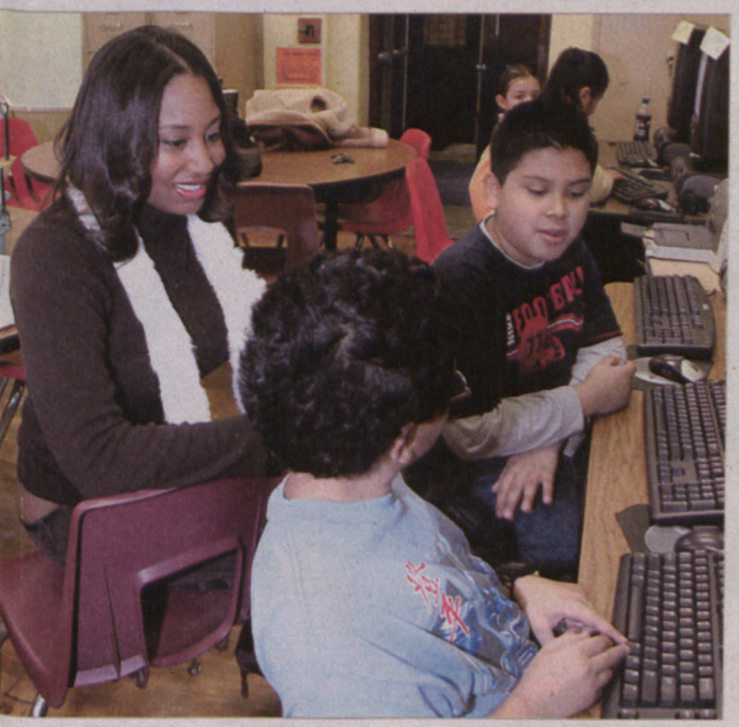
As with any newbie, the need for active oversight doesn't end once career-changers are certified. NEA's current resolu-

tion on teacher licensing calls for all new teachers to receive quality mentoring and induction programs to help overcome the primary obstacles to good teaching and learning: isolation and stagnation. "Every district should have a meaningful induction program to help new teachers succeed in working with students," says Washington. "It should include sufficient time, resources, and access to veteran teachers."

MEETING CLASSROOM CHALLENGES

Watching Overton command the attention of her students and guide them through a creative writing exercise (assignment: write about an awful chore, like stinky diaper changing!), one quickly gleans the quality of her induction and mentoring. A veteran teacher showed her the ropes, offering, "a bit of handholding to decipher the curriculum, state guidelines, academic folders, and things like child study teams." But for every Overton (and her dedicated mentor) there exists the possibility for a career-changer to flounder.

"It's the hardest job I've ever had," says Mark Martin, a former civil engineer turned drafting and engineering teacher at



Boulan Park Middle School in Troy, Michigan. During his first year at Boulan Park Middle, and even with the help of a mentor, "I'd wake up in the middle of the night and wonder what else I could do. I just knew it had to get better after the first year."

For 17 years, Martin worked at a power company, but the desire to teach—as he had considered doing right after college—remained. He began teaching at the local community college in 1999 and taking night classes for Michigan's alternative route. Upon certification, he began at Boulan Park Middle.

Martin says that his preparation fell short when it came to classroom management: "We didn't get enough about dealing with kids." For Overton, there wasn't enough in the curriculum about, well, teaching. "You learn about the mechanics of how a school runs, but [not enough] about how to actually teach the kids," she says. It was through observing her mentor and each day's experience in the classroom that she honed those skills.

Dynamics within the schools when they arrive can also be daunting. Ken Slavick, who left the business world and started at Clifton Avenue Grade School with Overton, remembers a couple people "frowned upon" their arrival. Mark Martin humbled himself. "I'm sure they looked at me and said, 'What does he

Jada Overton, left, gave up the corporate world for teaching. **Mark Martin,** above, went from guiding engineering projects to guiding children.

think he's doing?' I downplayed my age and learned from those who were younger but had been teaching for 5 or 10 years."

Even tougher audiences await career-switchers in their classrooms. The early days, "were horrible," Slavick says, chuckling now at the thought of his rookie season. "To go from substituting to suddenly having the full responsibility of a teacher was incredible."

For Overton, the rewards keep her from questioning her move. Like roughly 95 percent of job-switchers surveyed by the National Center for Education Information, she plans to stick with teaching. "In the corporate world, all I cared about was money and the career ladder," says Overton. "Now I feel so much more empathetic and sympathetic. Teaching has been nothing but positive." nea

Find More Online

Whether you're a new or veteran teacher, NEA has lots of useful information and practical advice on classroom management, lesson ideas, and more!

Go to www.nea.org and click on "MEMBERS & EDUCATORS."

PHOTOS LEFT, CENTER: RACHELLE OMENSON; RIGHT: VAUGHN GURGANIAN

Answering the Call

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

BY SABRINA HOLCOMB

Last month, we witnessed the positive impact NEA had on public education at the dawn of a new century—passionately advocating for children's right to an education and better working conditions for teachers. In part three of this series, NEA advances the cause of public education during the tumultuous first half of the 20th century.

Educating Immigrants. A multilingual teacher instructs immigrant students in an Ellis Island classroom. Schools were the true "melting pot" of American culture, where teachers were expected to assimilate large numbers of non-English-speaking children into mainstream society. Circa 1940s.

Salary Strife

In the early 20th century, meager wages remained a critical matter for the nation's teachers, even though their responsibilities continued to grow. Teachers taught expanded curriculums, fulfilled bureaucratic demands for increased paperwork and testing, and managed multiage classrooms with hundreds of students—many of whom were recent immigrants. A 1909 survey of major cities showed that more than half the students in any given classroom couldn't speak English.

Teacher shortages grew, as many left the profession for higher-paying jobs elsewhere. In response, NEA formed a commission to study the problem, later issuing a major report that proposed salary schedules to help retain teachers. Based on the report's findings, NEA renewed its push for a national Department of Education that would help fund programs to reduce illiteracy, train teachers, and equalize education opportunities for all children.

Meanwhile, NEA itself was in transition: It had grown too large to be run on an ad hoc basis by a small group of leaders and whoever showed up at the annual convention. Democratization was needed, as well as more direct connections between the national, state, and local Associations. In 1920, NEA became a Representative Assembly (RA), composed of delegates from affiliated states and locals.

Teachers Lend a Hand. The generosity of school teachers in Salt Lake City, Utah, made it possible for hundreds of hungry school kids to enjoy a hot meal. The upper photo shows a bread line and the lower photo an instructor ladling hot soup. The teachers took it upon themselves to see that no child desiring lunch would go without (original news caption). Circa 1931.

Depression Devastates Schools

Throughout the 1920s, NEA focused on improving teacher pay, establishing retirement pensions, and strengthening a public school system that was rapidly expanding to accommodate a massive influx of students. But on the morning of October 29, 1929, everything came to a halt. The U.S. stock market crashed and the ensuing Great Depression devastated the country, brutally impacting the nation's schools. As tax revenues shrunk, schools had no money for materials or supplies, and teachers copied texts longhand so there would be enough for students to use. Many schools were forced to close altogether.

NEA's work was more important than ever. Members visited schools throughout the country, working with the media to focus public attention on the plight of schools. In 1933, NEA became a member of the newly created Federal Advisory Committee on the Emergency in Education. Under the committee's direction, badly needed assistance and federal aid started flowing to schools.

PHOTOS LEFT AND CENTER: CORBIS; IMAGE RIGHT: NEA ARCHIVES

JOINT COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE

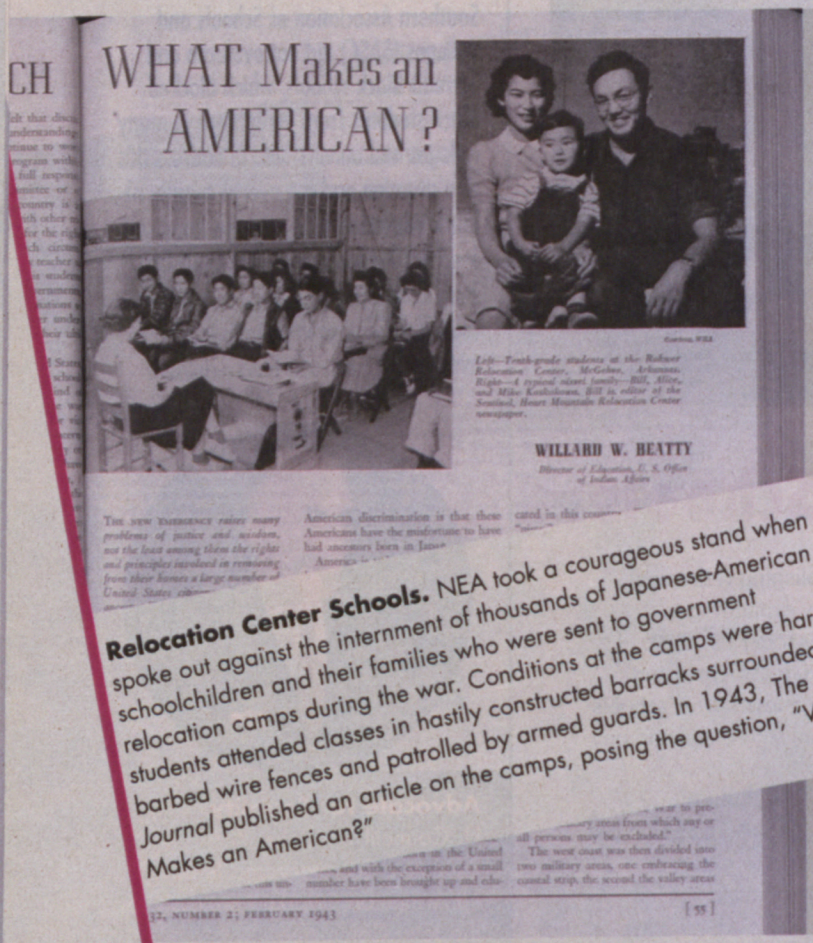
In 1926, a special committee was formed that would expand the scope and mission of NEA for years to come. At the time, many schools—and state Associations—were segregated. The Supreme Court's doctrine of "separate but equal" had effectively sentenced Black students to unequal funding, resources, and opportunities. The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SASC) did not evaluate and accredit Black schools, which blocked Black students from acceptance in many colleges and universities. To address this dire situation and the overall quality of Black education, NEA and the American Teachers Association formed their first Joint Committee. The partnership succeeded—SASC eventually began to evaluate and accredit Black schools.

Advocate for Equality. H. Councill Trenholm, ATA Executive Secretary and lifelong NEA member, worked tirelessly for the Joint Committee.

The War Effort

When America entered World War II in 1941, NEA played an active role in the nation's war effort, coordinating the rationing of sugar, oil, and canned goods; promoting the sale of Defense Savings Stamps and Defense Bonds in the schools; encouraging students to salvage scrap metal and plant "victory gardens"; and successfully lobbying Congress for special funding for public schools near military bases. This emergency funding helped relieve school districts burdened with financing the education of thousands of military schoolchildren who didn't add to the local area's tax base because they lived on federal installations.

NEA also lobbied strongly for the G.I. Bill of Rights to help returning soldiers continue their education. In addition to providing opportunities for individual veterans, the bill would have far-reaching consequences: With more than two million veterans attending college within the next seven years, higher education was no longer a privilege for the elite.



WHAT Makes an AMERICAN?

WILLARD W. BEATTY

Relocation Center Schools. NEA took a courageous stand when it spoke out against the internment of thousands of Japanese-American schoolchildren and their families who were sent to government relocation camps during the war. Conditions at the camps were harsh: students attended classes in hastily constructed barracks surrounded by barbed wire fences and patrolled by armed guards. In 1943, The NEA Journal published an article on the camps, posing the question, "What Makes an American?"

Landmark Decision for Education

In the aftermath of World War II, America's baby boom saw some 79 million students added to the nation's public schools. During the 1950s, the United States was, indeed, booming, but not for all: Minorities continued to suffer inequalities in all facets of American life, including public education. Although racial segregation in public schools was the norm, NEA continued to advocate for change. In the previous decade, the Association had refused to hold Representative Assemblies in cities that discriminated against delegates based on race.

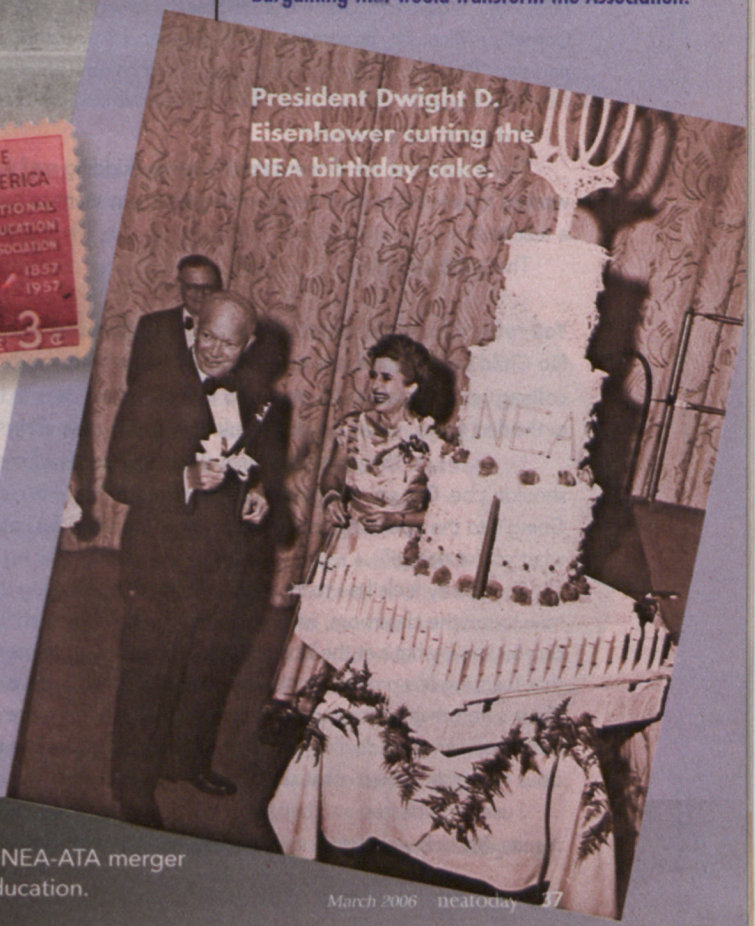
PHOTO CENTER: AP/WORLDWIDE PHOTOS; BOTTOM RIGHT: NEA ARCHIVES

Walking Tall. The nation watched as six-year-old Ruby Bridges integrated a Louisiana school under the protection of U.S. Marshals. Circa 1960.

CELEBRATING A CENTURY!

In 1957, NEA held its centennial anniversary in Philadelphia, the city where it all began. During NEA's first century, the state Associations focused on the protection and advancement of individual rights, while the national organization worked to strengthen public education, improve the credentialing of educators, and garner more respect for the profession. On its 100th birthday, NEA had over 700,000 members.

Then, two years later, another milestone was reached: Wisconsin became the first state to pass a collective bargaining law for public employees. The passage of this law, the first of many to come, helped usher in an era of teacher bargaining that would transform the Association.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower cutting the NEA birthday cake.

It had also affiliated with 18 Black teacher's associations in states where Black teachers were prohibited from joining White organizations.

Then, in 1954, the Supreme Court made a landmark decision that became one of the most important events in education and civil rights history. In *Brown v. Board of Education,* the Court ordered the desegregation of the nation's public schools, reversing its "separate but equal" doctrine and opening the door to a new era in public education. Black teachers had been largely responsible for financing the case: the American Teachers Association contributed more money to the *Brown v. Board* legal defense fund than any other single Black organization. After the victory, NEA's 1954 Representative Assembly urged all Americans to approach integration in a spirit of good will and fair play.

NEXT MONTH The NEA-ATA merger and the future of public education.

Teacher Man

Frank McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Angela's Ashes* and *'Tis*, recollects his 27 years as a New York City public school teacher in a new memoir called *Teacher Man*. McCourt, a lifetime union member, talks with *NEA Today* writer Mary Ellen Flannery about the state of teaching today.

In *Teacher Man*, you write that teachers are the "downstairs maid of professions...told to use the service door or go around the back."

Tell us how you really feel!

McCOURT: Teachers are dismissible! They're almost second-rate citizens. The attitude is that if you're a teacher, you've somehow failed at something else. When I'm on my book tours, and doing my talks, I tell people to imagine this: Your son or daughter attends Cornell or Michigan, or someplace like that, and they come home and say, "Dad, Mom, I've decided what I want to do with my life."

"Yes, honey?"

"I'd like to be a teacher."

The eruption at the dinner table! "Are you kidding me? I worked my a** off to send you to college and you want to be a *teacher*?"

That's the attitude!

You retired from the classroom in 1988, before the so-called No Child Left Behind law and its high-stakes tests made your colleagues miserable. As one who measured success in less orthodox ways, what do you think about this new direction?

McCOURT: The politicians have stuck their noses where they shouldn't be. Can you imagine a politician interfering with doctors? Going into the operating room and saying, "Stand aside! Let me see what you're doing!"

Everybody feels free to interfere with teachers—telling them how to run the classroom, what to teach, and how to teach it. And do you know what's at the bottom of it? The refusal to recognize that teaching is a profession; teaching is an art, teaching is a science. There's no other profession like it in the world, where you're in the trenches every day, dealing with flesh and minds. It requires tremendous energy and then great skill and scholarship.

I used to sidestep and bypass all the rules. And I was producing results. My kids were winning poetry contests. My kids were being published in *Seventeen Magazine* and the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*.

But today, it's nothing but testing! I don't know how this country got to be so powerful as it is without testing. How did we win wars? How did we win Nobel Prizes?

You're not a fan of high-stakes testing?

McCOURT: It kills the whole idea of what education could be. It has nothing to do with the sense of wonder and awe and curiosity that kids have, and it's all in the guise of raising standards. But whose standards? The politicians are responsible, and the NEA and the AFT have let them get away with it. There should be a massive walk-out in this country: "Take your test and shove it!"

But "No Child Left Behind" aren't the only four words that you hate to hear, there are others...

McCOURT: All That Time Off! I don't know how many times people have said that to me, "You get all that time off!" I want to ask them to step outside.

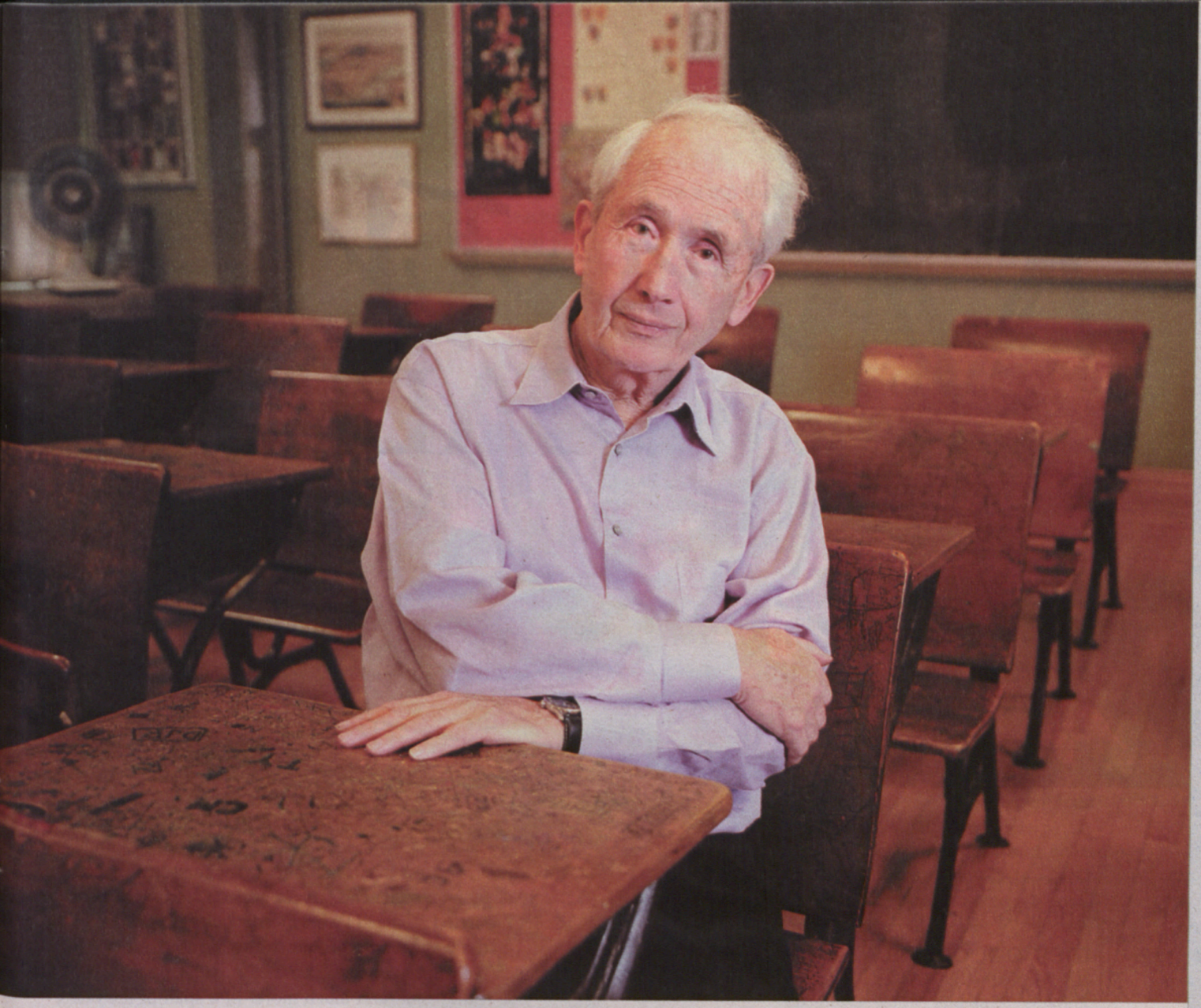
So how do you rescue the profession?

McCOURT: There's one word that will eventually save the teaching profession: Sexy.

Look at what's happened to the Irish in this country. Thirty years ago, the Irish were kind of simple-minded, brawling, mercurial fighters and drinkers. They're the ones who brought in the water and cut the wood. And then something happened. Now Ireland is the economic miracle, it's booming, and the Irish are on the international entertainment scene [with] Pierce Brosnan and Liam Neeson. Now the Irish are sexy— they're fashionable—and that one word has changed everything.

Part of the lack of respect for teachers may stem from the idea that anybody can be a teacher. Clearly that's not true. What do you think it takes to make great teachers?

McCOURT: New teachers need other teachers, and I don't mean college professors talking about pedagogy and philosophy. Teachers should be hired right from the classroom, at a professorial salary, to teach at NYU or Columbia for a year or two. Practical stuff.



And bring the future teachers into the classrooms, not just for observation, but to associate with hardened, professional teachers.

At the beginning of *Teacher Man* you write, "I'm told I should keep a red pen to record the bad things...because the red pen for bad things is the teacher's most powerful weapon." It's a tongue-in-cheek reference, but I wonder—what really is the teacher's best weapon?

McCOURT: Honesty. To say, "No, I don't know."

"But you're the teacher."

"Yeah, I don't know everything. I didn't take the course in Everything."

They'll drive you to honesty—"Oh, well, Mr. McCourt, that's not what you said last week."

So, if you do lie, you'll have to be a very good liar.

What about this idea that teachers also have to be performers? To keep their class interested and engaged?

McCOURT: The performer thing is OK in the beginning, to put on expressions of shock and so on. But it doesn't work. If you're putting it on, they know. They know you're putting on a mask. The sooner you can bridge the classroom and be your absolute self, the better.

And how long does that take?

McCOURT: Fifteen years—it took me that long to begin to feel comfortable in the classroom, so that I could enjoy myself. And I think that's much more intensive than any doctor's internship.

What's your best advice for new teachers?

McCOURT: As I said at the end of *Teacher Man*, "Find what you love and do it." I had a student teacher who was expert in the esoteric—strange religions, tea-leaf readings, and so on. I said, "Why don't you do that? Begin with the vocabulary of astrology." But she hid behind the desk...and it didn't work at all.

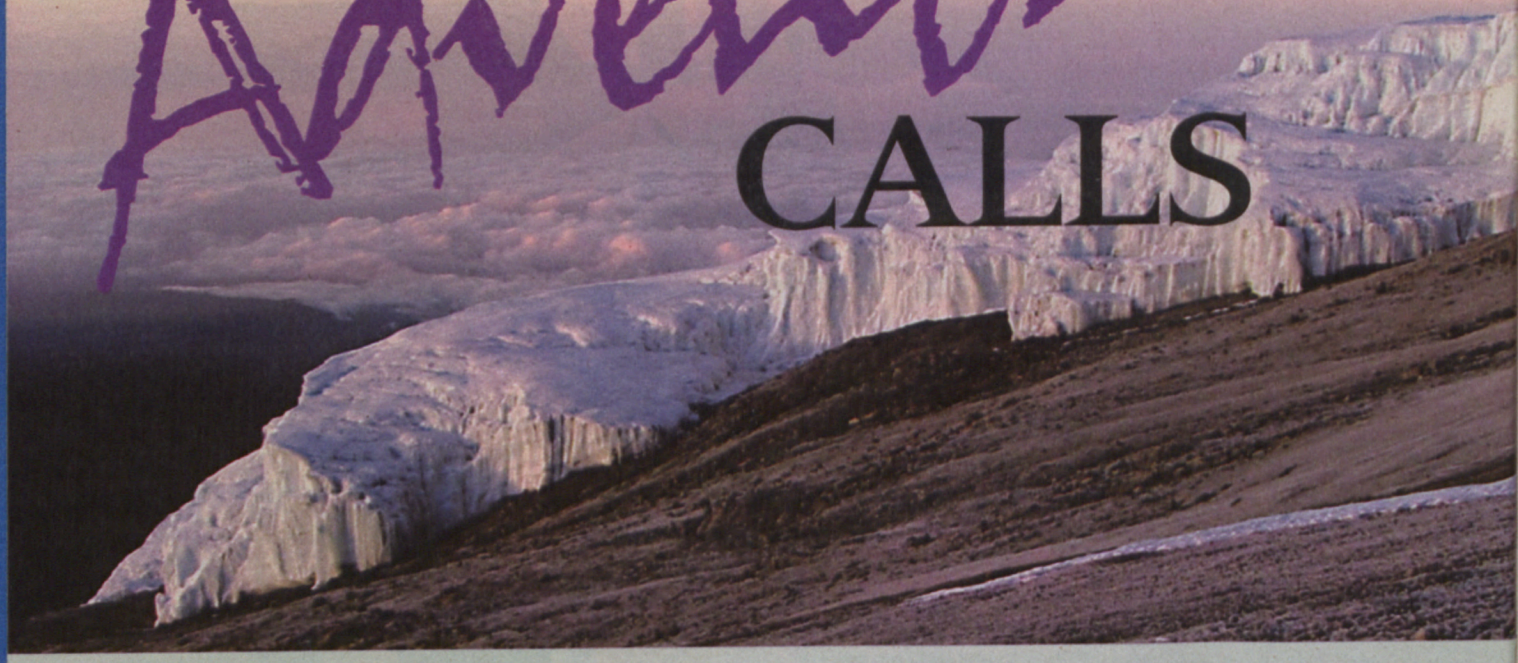
And would you advise students to go into education?

McCOURT: You'll never make much money or drive a Jaguar, but you'll never be bored. If you are bored, it's never anybody's fault but your own. I can't think of anything in life that would have given me the same satisfaction. But when you knew you hit a nerve in class, the atmosphere was electrifying—like everybody in the classroom, you and those 35 kids, all understood the same thing at the same time. To use an overused word, it was awesome. nea

TO READ an excerpt from *Teacher Man*, go to **www.neatoday.org**.

PHOTO: ERIN PATRICE O'BRIEN

Adventure CALLS



Planning on a quiet retirement? Think again. Retired educators seize their opportunity to see the world beyond the classroom.

BY THOMAS GRILLO

Wondering what to do on your next vacation? Teachers often use their travel experiences to enrich their classes back home. But if you're not sure where to go, you might want to take a tip from some NEA-Retired members who have found their inner explorer since filing their own lesson plans under "Finished!"

Thirty years ago, most Americans believed the stereotypes associated with aging: hit 50 and the road led straight downhill. At most, there might be a bus tour or an island cruise along the way. But these days, many retirees, especially educators, are using their newfound freedom to be more daring.

NIGHTTIME ON KILIMANJARO

Take Jo Ann Evans, 63, who taught elementary school near Portland, Oregon. "When I was teaching, I wasn't physically fit," she says. "I was in a classroom all day, corrected papers at night, and, in the summer, I just did projects around the house. After I retired, I assumed I would lead a quiet life. But my husband had always wanted to go to the Mount Everest base camp to see what it was like."

See it they did—and much more. In a span of six years, Evans has climbed Mount Saint Helens in Washington, hiked the Vatnajökull Ice Cap in Iceland, and completed a 190-mile coast-to-coast trek in northern England.

Last year, she and a group of younger teacher friends decided to tackle Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. At an altitude of 19,340 feet—nearly four miles—the extinct volcano is Africa's highest point. One reason Evans wanted to make the trip was that scientists estimate that the glacier atop Kilimanjaro will melt by 2020 because of global warming. "I wanted to see it before it disappeared," she says. "I didn't realize that Mount Kilimanjaro was climbable for someone like me, but I decided that this was something I could do, even though I was the oldest in the group."

"WE SPENT FOUR HOURS walking up stone steps chiseled in the mountain with no railings."
—MARILYN BOYCE

The most challenging part of the seven-day hike was the final trek to the top. The group started the final ascent at 10:30 p.m. with the goal of reaching the summit by sunrise. "We turned on our headlamps and traveled all night long," she recalls. "It was pretty grueling. We climbed over and around giant boulders in the dark." In the end, 7 of the 12, including Evans, made it to the top. Not bad for "the oldest in the group!"

INTO THE YUKON

Last summer, retired family and consumer science teacher Lilchy Huffman booked an action-packed, 10-day trip to Alaska with her great niece and nephew. Huffman, 58, is no novice traveler. While teaching for 33 years in Prince William County, Virginia, she toured China multiple times. She also flew in a hot air balloon over the Australian Outback, spotting wild horses and kangaroos from the air, not saying a word because "we wanted to enjoy the beauty in silence."

The intrepid traveler got the idea to see Alaska after flying over the state several times on her way to China. Her journey to "America's last frontier" began in Vancouver, British Columbia, with the trio boarding a cruise ship that made its way up to Ketchikan, Alaska, and through the islands of the Inside Passage to Skagway. In the port of Skagway, they boarded the White Pass Yukon train—a narrow-gauge railroad that was built during the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898—for a three-hour trip that took them up the mountains to White Pass Summit at 2,865 feet.

"The trip was spectacular," says Huffman. "We saw the Skagway River, glacial cut valleys, and beautiful rock formations. By the time we reached White Pass there was virtually no vegetation because it's above the freeze line."

Perhaps the most exhilarating part of the journey was a bus excursion to Denali National Park to take in the beauty of Mount McKinley, North America's tallest mountain. Denali includes more than six million acres and encompasses a complete sub-arctic ecosystem, home to grizzly bears, wolves, sheep, caribou, and moose.

Huffman and her companions then boarded a nine-seat plane to Coldfoot, Alaska, located 60 miles north of the Arctic Circle, a leg of the expedition that might give a less adventuresome traveler pause. "I don't have any fear," Huffman says. "I can't explain why." From Coldfoot, they drove to the Arctic town of Wiseman, population 30, where the small tour included a visit with a year-round resident.

"It was a trip back in time," she says. "The man lived in a log cabin, trapped furs to make into coats for warmth, and had cut six cords of wood to get through the winter. But I couldn't help but notice that he owned a TV and a computer!"

THE STEEP STONE STEPS OF MACHU PICCHU

Then there's Marilyn Boyce, a retired elementary school teacher from Michigan. Three years ago, she and her husband fulfilled a longtime dream of climbing to the ancient Peruvian city of Machu Picchu, nestled high in the Andes Mountains.

Built by the Incas some 500 years ago, Machu Picchu is perched on a ridge between two sharp mountain peaks and overlooks the Urubamba River. The city, spread over five square miles with over 3,000 steps linking its many different levels, is one of the largest pre-Colombian sites found virtually intact. It shows an astonishing architectural design and execution, including a terracing system built on extremely steep terrain.

"We wanted to see it before we got too old, because it's a very difficult climb," says Boyce, who is 61. To arrive at the site, "we spent four hours walking up stone steps chiseled into the mountain with no railings. It's dangerous and a guide takes you up very carefully and slowly."

Asked what she saw on the trip up, Boyce laughs and says, "My feet. I'm clumsy so I had to watch my step. But when we stopped at various plateaus along the way, we could look down into the Valley of the Incas and the river where we went white water rafting." Her advice to anyone who might follow in her footsteps? "It helped that my husband and I walk an hour a day, because there's lots of walking to do on these tours."

If, like these three retired teachers, you're thinking of exploring a more exotic locale, you won't be alone.

"Americans are much more interested in the world than they used to be, and they want to go beyond the usual tourist destinations," says Stephanie Nichols, a spokeswoman for Overseas Adventure Travel, a Boston-based travel agency that organizes tours for people over 50. And educators, she adds, are among the most avid travelers—they make up nearly a third of her customers. "It's a natural for them," says Nichols. "They are interested in lifelong learning and curious about the world. That's who they are." nea

Jo Ann Evans (top, at left) shares a hot meal on a cold Mount Kilimanjaro. **Lilchy Huffman** clowns with a bear skin in Alaska. And Marilyn Boyce takes a break from climbing at Machu Picchu.

PHOTOS LEFT AND TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF JO ANN EVANS; PHOTOS CENTER AND BOTTOM: COURTESY OF LILCHY HUFFMAN AND OF MARILYN BOYCE

Should girls be encouraged to take more math classes?

YES

A female student enters my classroom with a look of trepidation. "How am I doing in chemistry?" she asks, adding, "You know, math is the only class that's easy for me." She whispers the words like a secret.

Many of my female chemistry and physics students tell me they're good in math. Perhaps they don't think anybody else knows. Perhaps they're right. Girls should be encouraged to take more math classes so that the secret gets out.

The two disciplines that I teach require a fair amount of algebra and some higher math, but girls need to take rigorous math classes because they need the background to help them succeed in all of their classes, not just science. Assessing and collecting data, predicting financial outcomes, or engaging in population studies, for example, all require highly developed math skills.

When I was in high school, algebra was justified for girls because it helped us double recipes. Today we realize that girls need math to enter the fields of accounting, engineering, pharmaceuticals, and computer science, among others.

It's often been argued that girls' academic strengths lie in the areas of language arts and communication. I submit that mathematics is, simply put, another form of communication. Algebraic formulas have structure, syntax, and meaning. Statistics uses numbers and graphs to communicate complex concepts and ongoing trends. Geometry allows us to think in three dimensions and to defend proofs—skills important for girls.

I tell the students in my classes that I got straight A's in math right on up through Calculus III. I think it lets the girls (and boys) know that a female student can do well in math. Deep down, however, many of the girls already know this. It is their little secret, and they are just waiting to tell someone.

LINDA LEE KENNEDY teaches chemistry and physics at Briggs High School in Columbus, Ohio.

NO

Girls should not be encouraged to take more math classes. They should be encouraged to take more classes that will help them excel at what they are already good at; to take more classes in areas in which they need to improve; to take more classes that will help them prepare for college and to make a career choice.

If those classes happen to fall in the realm of math, so be it. Advice from teachers should be based on what is important to the child and her family, not on what statistics say about how genders perform in certain areas.

I know that females are underrepresented in math- and science-related fields. Three of my colleagues and I are busy recruiting sixth- to ninth-grade girls to attend a program called "Expanding Your Horizons," a day-long series of fun, educational workshops designed to introduce girls to a range of career fields in science, medicine, aerospace, engineering, and much more. Rather than finding ways to encourage taking particular classes, I continually seek out opportunities to introduce girls, as well as boys, to the different fields within science, math, and technology.

Like the "Expanding Your Horizons" program, these opportunities are not classes per se, but are workshops, field trips, and other activities that expose the kids to the topics in settings outside of the classroom. These experiences not only familiarize students with the academic side of the subjects, but also with their real-life applications, which could spark an interest in a course of study for college and a career. If an experience clicks with a student and ignites an interest, they then know what classes will best prepare them for that particular course of study or career. If the classes happen to be math classes, only then would I encourage students (male or female) to take more math classes.

LARRY VOLPE teaches fifth grade at the Seven Trees School in San Jose, California.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should girls be encouraged to take more math classes?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers wear business attire to school?
The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today*: 42% Yes 58% No

Should educators be required to take diversity training?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Cindy Long, **clong@nea.org**.

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

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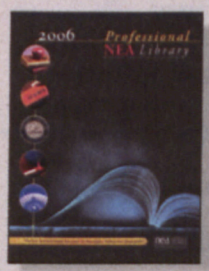

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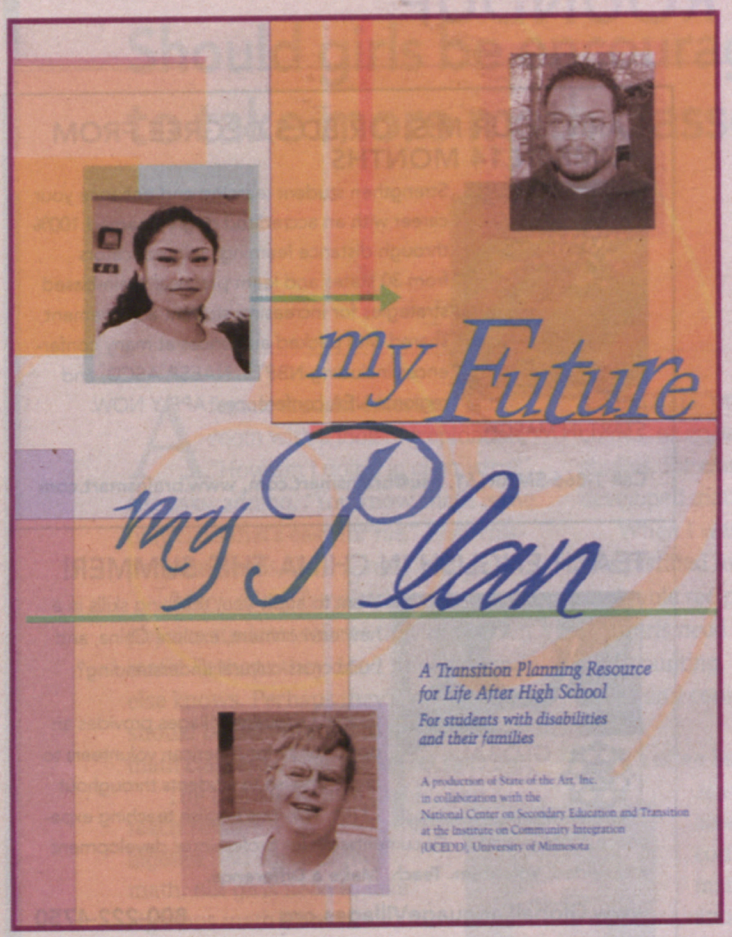
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For students with disabilities
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Life doesn't end after high school

But for students with disabilities, planning for that transition can be challenging. Now, students with IEPs are required by law to have a transition plan in place by age 14.

My Future My Plan is a transition planning resource that encourages early, student-centered transition planning for students with disabilities. This three-part resource includes:

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- A 36-page companion guide to the student workbook with suggestions for teachers and family members on how they can support students in the transition planning process

When Mom's A Marine

Life can be tough when you're constantly moving and your parents are in danger.

The new student shows up in November, knows nobody, isn't familiar with the schoolwork, and may have no records from his previous school.

Sound familiar? It's a situation facing many teachers around the country. One group of highly transient students come from military families, who move about three times as often as most American families, says the Johns Hopkins University Military Child Initiative. There are more than one million military children in U.S. public schools and many move 10 or more times before graduating from high school, according to Department of Defense statistics.

For these children, who often come to a new school a few weeks into the school year, the challenges can range from not having someone to sit with at lunch, to not getting into honors courses, to arriving too late to make the soccer team—plus, they often suffer the strain of having a parent deployed.

Jennifer Arsenault enjoys a teaching moment with two students from military families at Birdneck Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

"Too often, our military dependents don't receive the help they need when they move into public schools," says Sheridan Pierce, president of the Federal Education Association/NEA, which represents 6,000 education employees who work in the Department of Defense school system worldwide. Pierce, a math and chemistry teacher with 37 years in the classroom, notes, "Some teachers think of military kids as just passing through. These kids face the same challenges the rest of their peers do—insecurity, peer pressure, trying to fit in. Add to it that they're moving every year or two and may have parents away—it's very stressful, especially if the parent is in a combat zone."

How can public schools help?

Pierce says public schools could be more flexible about both instructional and extracurricular activities. Honor societies should admit students who were in an honor society in a previous school, and clubs shouldn't have membership deadline cutoffs or too-stringent requirements, he says.

"The most difficult part for military students in a new school centers around social adjustment," says school psychologist Michael Priser. "Many adjust well, but others have difficulties." He recommends that schools assign "peer welcomers" to new students.

Linda Boswell, an education specialist for the Navy's Pacific Fleet, emphasizes the period when a child has just come into a new school. "Their first two weeks, students are very fragile," she says, and it makes all the difference if new students have a "peer buddy" to eat lunch or spend recess with—someone to ease those times in the school day when a child can feel most like "the new kid on the block."

Teachers also need to be alert for signs a military child is suffering from a parent's deployment. "We try to emphasize that parents should make schools aware when a child has a parent away," says Kathy Wooldridge, a school liaison officer for the U.S. Navy's Hawaii region. "Military families might hesitate to do this. They don't want their child to get special treatment. But it's good if a teacher knows."

"The parent may be sent to the Middle East and be separated from the family for 12 or 18 months," says Priser. Teachers can watch for signs of stress, like changes in academic performance, mood swings, sudden behavioral problems, changes in eating patterns, or becoming withdrawn. While military children face special challenges, they have a lot to offer in the classroom, those who've worked with them attest. Says Wooldridge, "Military kids are open, flexible, have seen the world. That's a real asset when kids are studying geography or history."

"The military child is very motivated," says Pierce. "They do a very good job of transitioning if they have some choices and opportunities to become part of their school community."

—CHRIS BARTOLOMEO

NEED HELP helping military children? Find resources at **www.defenselink.mil/mtom/index_k.htm** and **www.militarystudent.org**.

PHOTO: D. KEVIN ELLIOTT

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

What was your worst incident as a first-year teacher?

ANSWER: About 10 minutes into my very first class, two small girls began screaming. The boy sitting between them was using scissors on a project and had badly cut his hand. I went a little weak but managed to get him some paper towels and have the two girls walk him next door to the nurse's office. I continued with the lesson, but realized—that's it, they're going to fire me. Well, that didn't happen. The boy became one of my best students, and the nurse one of my closest friends!

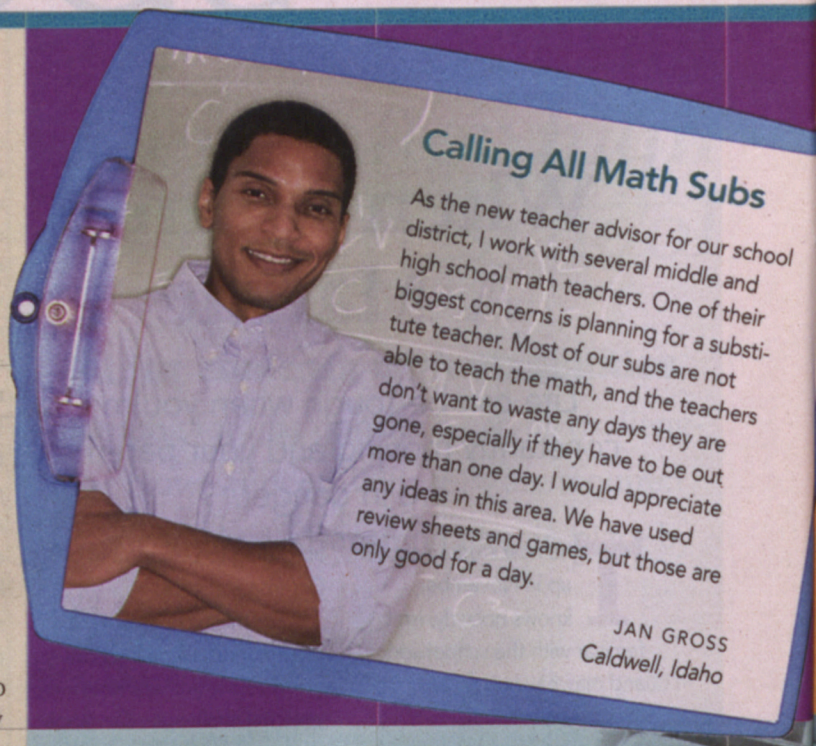
MEGAN LEMCKE
Mountainair, New Mexico

ANSWER: I accidentally confused the sound of the elevator alarm bell with the fire alarm bell while teaching. Without thinking, I had all my students rush outside as usual, only to see the art teacher and all of her students waving at me from their classroom windows. Needless to say, we were the only class outside...better safe than sorry!

ALLISON ROTH
Technology education teacher
East Brunswick, New Jersey

ANSWER: First Day of School—I get up at 4:30 and get ready to hit the road for my hour-plus drive to school. At 5:30, I have to come back home for something I forgot. I hit the road again and spend the hour contemplating everything I need to do before the kids arrive. Everything I need is in the back seat ready to go, and my lunch is on the seat beside me. I'm ready! I pull up to the school at 6:40, toss my keys in my purse, get out of the car, walk to the other side to get my stuff and...THE DOOR IS LOCKED! My keys are in my purse on the front seat. AGGGH!

MEGAN KESTER
Beaufort, South Carolina



Calling All Math Subs

As the new teacher advisor for our school district, I work with several middle and high school math teachers. One of their biggest concerns is planning for a substitute teacher. Most of our subs are not able to teach the math, and the teachers don't want to waste any days they are gone, especially if they have to be out more than one day. I would appreciate any ideas in this area. We have used review sheets and games, but those are only good for a day.

JAN GROSS
Caldwell, Idaho

MAGIC ERASERS

Mr. Clean Magic Erasers are the best for cleaning dry erase boards. They even cleaned off the stain I made when I accidentally used a permanent marker on my dry erase board!

CANDY CLAYTON
First-grade teacher, Sidney, Ohio

TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TI

Storing Posters

I recently discovered that the core cardboard from paper towels or toilet paper placed over a rolled up poster work great for keeping posters neat and tidy. Just slip the core over the outside of a rolled-up poster. Label or color code the tubes to keep them categorized for easy access. No more clothes pins or paper clips to pop off or get caught on each other. Best of all, the cardboard is free, and elementary students love to bring in all you can use. You can flatten the cores for easy storage in small re-closable plastic bags until needed.

ELAINE LEET
Elementary school teacher
Warren County, North Carolina

PHOTO TOP LEFT: C SQUARED STUDIOS; CLIPBOARD PHOTO: BLEND IMAGES; PAINT BOX PHOTO: PHOTODISC; TOILET PAPER PHOTO: BRAND X PICTURES; CARTOON: G. ABBOTT

TIME SAVERS

My students pick up handouts from a small table on their way into class, which has eliminated the need to pass out papers. I color code my five classes and use the appropriate color marker to grade each period's papers. When it's time to put grades into the computer, I can tell at a glance I've got the right batch. Finally, I start every class period by setting a timer for 10 minutes of silent reading. I spend a minute taking attendance, and then I get to read too! (You could also use the time to quietly set up equipment or materials.)

LYNNE KELSEY
Thousand Oaks, California

LAUGH LINES

Art or Artifice?

One of my second-graders came into my office the day after I highlighted my hair. The instant she caught sight of my "new do," she said in amazement, "Mrs. Vogel, you tie-dyed your hair!"

JANET VOGEL
School counselor
Herndon, Virgina

Think Tank

My co-teacher in geography class was asking students questions to stimulate their higher-order thinking skills. At the end of class, she asked the students why she was asking them these questions. One girl raised her hand and tentatively asked, "Because we're students?"

NANCY HOLLAND
Middle school teacher
Nashville, Tennessee

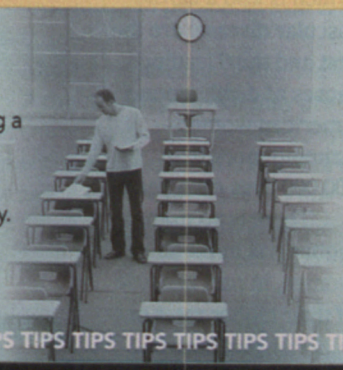
Earache

Upset with my class for not listening one day, I sternly admonished them, "You let what I say go out one ear and in the other!" Several of my students laughed and said, "We've never heard it said that way before!" Ooops. Guess they were listening after all.

KAREN HEFFELFINGER
Vocational tech teacher
Lansford, Pennsylvania

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE?

Send a fun story to Sabrina Holcomb, **sholcomb@nea.org**.



COIN TRAYS

Organize play money for math lessons by dividing used watercolor paint trays into compartments using a strip of cardstock paper. Folding the cardstock into five sections with 1/4-inch dividers allows your students to select, count, and replace their coins quickly.

JUDY LOCKE
Third-grade math teacher, Kihei, Hawaii

PLAN AHEAD

Before you leave for vacation or a long weekend, plan for the day you return. You'll be able to enjoy your time off and will be a lot less stressed that first day back at school.

DENISE HAMWAY
French teacher, Melrose, Massachusetts

TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS TIPS

Seeing Red

When we go over homework in my Spanish classes, students mark their corrections in red. At the end of each chapter, I give a homework quiz, and students write the answers they have in their workbook. I have found that even students who habitually do not complete homework will write down the correct answers (after I have checked homework, of course), so they will receive a good quiz grade. This way they are exposed to the material at least twice, writing it in their workbook and on a homework quiz. I give the homework quiz the day after the chapter test.

JOY ALPHIN
Currituck, North Carolina

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by Mark Parisi
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Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What was the moment you decided to become a teacher?

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EGG TIMER PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES; MAP IMAGE: NICK DOLDING; MEGAPHONE IMAGE: CHRIS ANDREWS; CLASSROOM PHOTO: TOM MERTON; CARTOON: MARK PARISI

Take Health to Heart

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death among American women? Your doctor may not know either.

BY SHEREE CRUTE

One night six years ago, Evelyn Mallery was strolling out of a play, chatting with her daughter about the evening, when suddenly she was overcome with dizziness. "I thought I was just reacting to someone's strong perfume," Mallery says. "I got into the car, leaned against the door, and waited for it to pass." Luckily for Mallery, her daughter had other ideas. She insisted her mom go to the emergency room. Doctors there told Mallery she'd had a mild heart attack.

"I'd been having mild chest pains for six or seven months at that point, but I thought it was just job-related stress," explains Mallery, who was dealing with a difficult classroom environment at the Vacaville, California, high school where she teaches English. "Heart disease was the last thing on my mind. I didn't have high blood pressure or high cholesterol. I was a few pounds overweight but nothing dramatic, and no one in my family had heart disease."

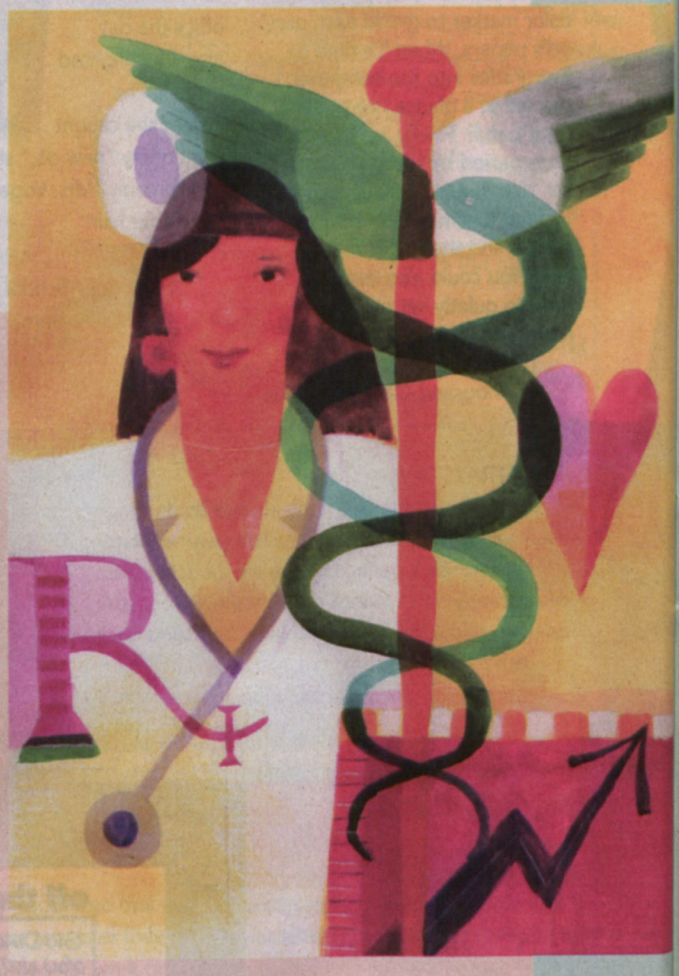
After several tests, doctors discovered a small blockage in a tiny artery. Mallery, who was 53 at the time, had open heart surgery to remove the blockage, but there was still a question about the role stress might have played, given her lack of other risk factors.

Undiagnosed—and Dangerous

If Mallery's story sounds unusual, it's not. Women like her are the norm, not the exception, when it comes to heart disease. She didn't recognize her symptoms, and she was under severe stress for at least a year before she got sick.

"Physicians often underestimate risk in women, even when their risk factors are the same as men," says Lori Mosca, M.D., chair of the American Heart Association's (AHA) expert panel on Guidelines for Women. A recent survey of physician awareness found that only one in five knew that heart disease and stroke (which is also a cardiovascular disease) are the first and third leading causes of death among American women—claiming more than 500,000 lives each year.

"There is an even higher risk in Black women, in part because of their higher rates of hypertension and diabetes," explains Elizabeth Ofilli, M.D., chief of cardiology at the Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta. "And [there are] higher rates among Hispanic women because of the increasing number of women with diabetes or obesity." Yet a national AHA poll found that only 13 percent of women surveyed identified heart disease as their leading health risk. A whopping 51 percent thought it was breast cancer.



Women are also different than men when it comes to diagnostic tests for cardiovascular disease. "Standard stress testing is less accurate in women," says Sharonne N. Hayes, M.D., director of the Women's Heart Clinic at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "Electrocardiograms are also more likely to read false positive or negative in women."

Faced with these issues and attitudes, Mosca and a team of top cardiologists from around the country have been working with AHA, Women Heart (the only national support organization for women who have been diagnosed with heart disease), and other experts to make sure that women like Mallery can recognize and manage their risk in advance, which is the most powerful weapon against heart disease.

How much control do we have? Hereditary factors may increase your personal risk, but "lifestyle is huge," says Mosca. "In some cases, it can account for 80 percent of your risk."

Taking Control

Fortunately for women, scientists, physicians, and health care advocates are working hard to reveal the secrets of heart disease—how it develops, what triggers an attack, how we can protect ourselves—so that we have more hope for prevention than ever before. Everything from attitude to healthy eating and getting enough exercise can make a difference. People working in education have a little extra motivation, says Hayes. "Of course they can help themselves, but they also can have a tremendous positive influence on the next generation." Here's how you can begin to make heart health a priority:

Use the educator's edge. "Teachers are experts at modeling," says Hayes. Use that concept to help the kids and yourself by bringing healthy snacks and exercise into your classroom. And go one step further, she suggests, "Be an advocate for a healthy school environment. Fight for healthier school lunches for you and your students."

Create your personal risk profile. In 2004, AHA teamed up with leading cardiologists and experts to develop specific guidelines to help women recognize their risk. Go to http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/109/5/672 to determine whether you're at a low, moderate, or high level of risk.

Know your numbers. The AHA offers a simple, printable chart for keeping track of cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight. Log onto www.americanheart.org and click on "Go Red for Women," then "Know Your Numbers."

Work with your doctor. "Women can teach their physicians to do a better job of treating heart disease by asking the right questions," Hayes advises. "Be proactive; make sure your doctor asks about your cholesterol and blood pressure." If you're at moderate or high risk, ask if you're a candidate for cholesterol-lowering drugs or hypertension medication.

Learn the signs of a heart attack. Forget chest pain. Dizziness, fatigue, nausea, and weakness may come first. Your chest may not hurt at all! Check out "Heart Attack/Stroke Warning Signs" at www.americanheart.org to learn more.

Understand the critical role of emotional well-being. Recent research shows that only 50 percent of heart attacks can be directly attributed to factors such as high cholesterol. Edward C. Suarez, a professor of psychiatry at Duke who conducts research on inflammation, heart disease, and stress, says that chronic states of distress—such as irritability, anger, and anxiety—trigger chemical reactions in the body that damage arteries.

Work your network. "Pull together your support," says Suarez. "Teachers might pick a buddy who understands the job and trade off listening to each other." Talking with a trusted colleague can help you calm down and gain perspective on the situation.

Make happiness a goal. "We've found that depression may precede heart disease," explains Joyce Bromberger, a professor at the school of public health at the University of Pittsburgh. "And many studies have shown that women have rates of depression that are two-fold higher than men. If you feel down, tell your doctor and ask to be evaluated. If you're depressed, get treatment."

Work your body. Exercise is a necessary component of any prevention plan. "Your school is the perfect environment for a daily workout," says Trevor Douglin, personal trainer and founder of Move It Intense Training in Brooklyn, New York. "If you have a track or gym, request permission to use the facilities on your break, lunchtime, or after school," says Douglin. "Start out walking one lap around the gym. Once you feel stronger, add three-pound dumbbells and more laps. Walk 10 minutes at a time, three times a day, or do 30 minutes all at once."

Ultimately, protecting your heart health and reducing your risk of disease is in your hands. "Everyone is looking for the magic bullet, but the fact is, it lives within," Mosca says. "Take 30 minutes a day to calm yourself, and try to feel gratitude for all you have. You can't be depressed and thankful at the same time. Thankfulness heals the heart." nea

Managing Heart Disease

NEA Member Tip

Marcia Boone, a special education teacher at Morrow High School in Morrow, Georgia, has lived her entire life knowing she was at very high risk for heart disease. By 33, even though she was only a size 10, Boone was diagnosed with blood pressure high enough to require medication. Then Boone lost a kidney—due, in part, to hypertension—and eventually developed diabetes and high cholesterol. Yet today, at 58, she's still square dancing once a week. Her solution? Trump those risk factors one step at a time.

Boone's tips for managing heart disease:

EXERCISE. I walk 8,000 steps a day, using my pedometer to keep track, and I do 4,000 of those steps at school.

EAT HEALTHY. I don't eat salt, and I stick with seven servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

BE A GOOD PATIENT. I take my hypertension and cholesterol medication and follow my health plan, faithfully.

Check out Boone's delicious low-fat recipe for mincemeat chiffon pie on www.neatoday.org!

ILLUSTRATION: ILLUSTRATION WORKS

A Vow To Change Lives

Tragedy compelled California teacher Paul White to do even more for his students.

WHEN A STUDENT DIES in a teacher's arms, that educator is changed irreversibly. One day in 2002, after White dismissed students from the alternative high school he teaches at in Canoga Park, California, one of his 17-year-old students was shot in the chest in a drive-by attack. White held and consoled him as he died.

He determined that the one-room West Valley Leadership Academy would become more than a daily holding facility for alternative students. Instead of merely babysitting students sent there because of severe behavioral problems, he would turn them into active participants in their own education—men and women who hungered for achievement.

With school board support, White instituted new discipline measures, such as random drug testing, and banned gang-related clothing and paraphernalia. Monthly meetings with parents became the norm, as did more lessons in the curriculum relevant to students' lives. A typical day now includes lessons on life skills, such as business etiquette and treating people with respect. And every student has White's cell phone number for 24-hour assistance.

His approach is working. More than 80 percent of White's students graduate now. That exceeds the Los Angeles traditional public school average. Part teacher, part counselor and parent, White also sounds a little bit like a revolutionary when he talks about the changes needed to help his students. If the current system of reaching such students isn't working, White says, "it needs to be knocked down and rebuilt."

—DESIREE MILLER

Home Is Where Her Heart Is

Maryland's Johnnie Mae Armstrong helps the mentally ill find new homes.

ON THE WEEKENDS, one might find Armstrong combing flea markets and discount stores for bargains on chairs, beds, and other home furnishings. But it's not to feather her own nest. Rather, Armstrong sits on the board of directors of a nonprofit organization in Montgomery County, Maryland, that provides neighborhood housing for people recovering from mental illness. Her specialty is interior design, and the treasures she buys end up in the 21 houses purchased and renovated by her group, which currently serves 75 county residents.

A member of the Montgomery County Teachers Association-Retired, Armstrong says she started helping people with mental and learning disabilities during her 34-year career as an elementary school teacher, when they were her students. Her interest became more personal once she retired, when she learned a relative was struggling to recover from a mental illness.

"I tried to learn everything I could about the support available to people with these disabling illnesses, and quickly found out that publicly funded help was sorely lacking," says Armstrong. "The first time I saw people sleeping on grates in Washington, D.C., it brought tears to my eyes; and I realized that I needed to help."

She's been doing that for eight years. "No one should ever sell a person in recovery from mental illness short," says Armstrong. "Our residents work as cashiers and as drivers. They're going to college—and finishing. They flourish when given the opportunity. I feel blessed that I have my health so I can keep helping those who can't always help themselves."

—MATT SIMON

PHOTOS TOP: CORAL VON ZUMWALT; BOTTOM: CHARLES VOTAW

Seeing a New Way

Iowa teacher Julie Benge lost her eyesight on a field trip, but returned quickly to the classroom.

BENGE, A SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER at Fort Madison High School in Fort Madison, Iowa, always figured it would be her left eye to one day give her trouble. Born with glaucoma in that eye, the 45-year-old wife, mother, and educator, could see just fine though. But while embarking with her students on a field trip in December 2004, she lost her balance exiting a van and slammed onto the cement.

"The van door opened wider than I expected it to and I just fell flat on my face," says Benge.

Her bad eye wasn't affected by her fall, but her good one was. She suffered severe damage as her right cornea and retina ruptured. "I had many surgeries and the doctors were excellent," says Benge. "I could get around with some sight." That was short-lived though, and as her eyesight deteriorated, she found herself plunged into a new, dark world.

It wasn't dark enough for Benge to lose her way. Just two months after her accident, she returned to school, teaching half days. "With wonderful support from my family and associates, I was able to finish the year and see what I needed to see," says Benge. Her two classroom assistants' work make it possible for her to remain an active and involved teacher for the students. And those students know that nothing gets by her, even if she is visually impaired.

"I am still very much aware of what is going on as far as what skills my students have passed and what skills they need to repeat," says Benge. Her students have also helped in her return to the classroom, becoming more cooperative and independent learners as the situation warrants.

It's a new life, Benge says, and it's a positive one. "Life keeps going. There is never any reason to be down."

—RITU SHARMA

Lights, Camera, Award-winning Action

Illinois teachers Joe Fatheree and Craig Lindvhal nab regional Emmys for poignant documentary.

KEN BURNS. MICHAEL MOORE. Add Fatheree and Lindvhal to the list of award-winning documentarians and take special note because they're both classroom teachers.

Fatheree of Effingham High School in Effingham, Illinois, and Lindvahl of neighboring Teutopolis High School, co-teach technology programs. But it's their work behind the camera that's earned them five Mid-America Emmy Awards.

The two men (and Lindvhal's answering machine) make up film production company Callan Films. The team—who met when seated together at a conference—wrote and directed a documentary titled *An Uphill Climb*. It tells the story of Kyle Packer, a man with cerebral palsy who crawled on his knees to the Mt. Everest base camp. Fatheree met Packer when he came to Effingham High to speak about his arduous climb.

The film, which the duo describes as "an unashamedly optimistic portrait, celebrating the human spirit," hits televisions nationwide this spring on PBS. Their Emmys came for writing, editing, cinematography, promotion, and music.

"This film opened an entirely new world to me and has definitely made me a better educator," says Fatheree. "It has made me more empathetic, and helped strengthen my belief that everyone has something to offer."

—D.M.

TO VIEW a clip from *An Uphill Climb*, visit www.neatoday.org.

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski, section editor, at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP: MARK TADE; BOTTOM: ERIC WILLIAMS

resources

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Start Planning for The NEA Foundation's June Grant Review

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY JUNE 1, 2006, FOR BOTH INNOVATION GRANTS AND LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS. Recipients will be notified by November 15, 2006. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

Innovation Grants and *Learning & Leadership Grants* are available for all subjects, including the arts, literacy, mathematics, science, and technology. Grant amounts are $5,000 for *Innovation Grants* and either $2,000 (individual) or $5,000 (group) for *Learning & Leadership Grants.*

The NEA Foundation has funded over 1,500 grants nationwide to NEA members over the years. Read about recent projects at the Foundation's Web site, and submit your own idea!

All practicing K–12 public school teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff are encouraged to apply. Applying for a grant is easy—why wait?

Visit **www.neafoundation.org** today for more information, including guidelines and an application. Or call 202-822-7840.

SPACE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TEACHERS

Credentialed preK–12 teachers who are of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry, or who work with students of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry, are eligible to apply for the Lucy Enos Memorial Scholarship for Teachers.

The scholarship provides a unique opportunity to travel to Colorado Springs and participate in the Space Foundation's annual Summer Institute program. The winner receives a travel allowance, meal and lodging expenses, and full tuition and fees to attend any one of the five weekly, in-residence courses that comprise the Summer Institute, which begins June 19, 2006.

Courses cover topics ranging from rocketry and robotics to astronomy and living and working in space, and each is designed to help teachers use space themes in their classrooms. Applications are due to the Space Foundation by **April 14, 2006,** and should be addressed to Dr. Patricia Arnold, Vice President Education and Workforce Development, Space Foundation, 310 S. 14th St., Colorado Springs, CO 80904. Visit **www.SpaceFoundation.org** for information.

FRIEND OF EDUCATION AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE APRIL 4

NEA is now accepting nominations for the NEA Friend of Education Award. Friends of education are people whose leadership acts and support of education at the national level establish the nominee as a true friend of education, education employees, or students. Nominations are due on **April 4, 2006.**

Nominations *must include*:

- name of the nominee
- nominee's position and/or organizational affiliation
- nominee's mailing address (or organization mailing address)
- name of the nominator or affiliate
- signature of nominator or affiliate officer
- name of nominator's local affiliate, if applicable
- nominator's mailing address

PHOTO: STOCKDISC CLASSIC

- nominator's phone number.

If the nominator is an NEA member, send proof of membership (such as an *NEA Today* mailing label that includes a membership number).

In 100 words or less, indicate the reason for your nomination and summarize the nominee's qualifications for the award. Supporting materials, such as publications or videos, may be submitted along with the nomination information.

Submit all materials to: NEA Friend of Education Award Committee, Executive Office, National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036; Attn: Carol Adams. Nomination information may also be faxed to 202-822-7974.

CALLING ALL SUPER HERO TEACHERS!

To recognize teachers for their heroic efforts, OfficeMax, Marvel Entertainment, and TeachersCount have teamed up to present the first ever OfficeMax Super Hero Teacher of the Year contest. This competition will recognize outstanding middle school teachers and the students who nominate them by turning them into comic book characters. Students in grades 6–8 can nominate teachers by writing short essays on "Why My Teacher Is a Super Hero," and mailing entries to TeachersCount or dropping off entries at participating OfficeMax stores until **March 17, 2006.**

Final judging will be performed by representatives from OfficeMax, Marvel Comics, Teachers Count, NEA, and the American Federation of Teachers. Essays will be judged on relevance, creativity, originality, and merit of accomplishments as outlined in the essay.

Winners will be announced May 9, 2006—National Teacher Appreciation Day. One grand-prize-winning teacher and student will make an illustrated cameo appearance in a mainstream Marvel comic book and will appear in a special-edition Marvel comic honoring teachers as Super Heroes. Other prizes include OfficeMax gift cards, funds for professional development, and more. Five first-prize-winning teachers and their students will appear in the special-edition Marvel comic and receive OfficeMax gift cards. Five runner-up teachers and their students will receive OfficeMax gift cards.

Contest details, entry forms, and rules can be found at participating OfficeMax stores and online at **www.teacherscount.org**, **www.officemax.com**, **www.marvel.com**, and **www.coverconcepts.com**.

ARE YOU AN AMERICAN STAR OF TEACHING?

The U.S. Department of Education will honor outstanding classroom teachers through the American Stars of Teaching program. The Department's Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative is seeking nominations and information about teachers who are improving student achievement, using innovative strategies in the classroom, and making a difference in the lives of their students. Teachers across all grade levels and disciplines will be honored this fall. Parents, students, colleagues, school administrators, and others can nominate an exemplary teacher who they believe has the qualities to be an American Star of Teaching. One teacher will be recognized from each state. To nominate a teacher, visit **www.t2tweb.us/AmStar/Nominate.asp** and fill out the nomination form. All nominations must be completed by **April 15, 2006.**

COME OUT AND PLAY

Kids ages 6–15 around the country can enter to win $5,000 from Nickelodeon's "Let's Just Play" Giveaway Program to improve their school or community program's fitness resources. The initiative is part of the network's "Let's Just Play" campaign, which encourages healthy and active lifestyles for kids and families. For April and May, Nickelodeon will randomly select 20 entries each month to receive the award. To enter, kids must fill out an entry form and mail it to Nickelodeon. Go to **www.nick.com/all_nick/everything_nick/** for details and an entry form.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

Women's History Month

Susan B. Anthony

The National Women's History Project was founded in 1980. Within a few years it had spawned National Women's History Week, celebrated by thousands of schools and communities. In 1987, with support from women's organizations, museums, libraries, and educators, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the weekly celebration to the month of March. This year's theme is "Women—Builders of Communities and Dreams."

The grandmother of Web sites for this event is still the National Women's History Project (NWHP) at **www.nwhp.org.** You'll find background information, suggestions for promoting Women's History Month, materials pertaining to this year's theme (for purchase), profiles of NWHP honorees, a calendar of important historical events featuring women, notable women's birthdays, and resources for teachers.

Cover of program for the National American Women's Suffrage Association procession in Washington, D.C., 1913.

The History Channel honors Women's History Month with a Web site featuring a history of women's suffrage, a historical timeline, a women's hall of fame with one-paragraph biographies, firsts in women's achievements, a "did you know?" area, and more. Turn your Web browser to **www.historychannel.com/exhibits/womenhist/**.

The National Women's History Museum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational institution dedicated to celebrating the rich and diverse history of women's contributions to American culture and society. With the goal of one day opening a permanent facility in Washington, D.C., the online cybermuseum currently hosts exhibits that trace the history of women's suffrage and women's participation in the Olympic Games. Go to **www.nwhm.org**.

Thomson Gale's Web site features an area that is particularly rich in women's biographies at **www.gale.com/womenshistory**. They expand admirably on the standard entries, and examine women like Maya Lin (architect who designed the Vietnam Memorial), Leslie Marmon Silko (Native American writer and poet), Antonia Hernandez (Mexican-American lawyer and civil rights activist), and Dorothy Dandridge (African-American actress) to name just a few.

The National Register of Historic Places has created a Web site that takes viewers on tours of historic properties commemorating the events, people, designs, and achievements that illustrate women's contributions to our nation's history. Use the itineraries to visit the sites online or in person. Go to **www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/wom/index.htm**.

Women's suffrage office, Ohio.

Susan B. Anthony's personal copy of "An Account of the Proceedings on the Trial of Susan B. Anthony."

Suffragist—"Mrs. Suffern"—advocates for women's right to vote.

NEA Launches a New Program

We're bringing books back to Gulf Coast schools.

NEA IS PARTNERING with The NEA Foundation, First Book, and The Heart of America Foundation to bring books to children in need and to public school libraries that were affected by damage from hurricanes last summer and fall. Gulf Coast public school libraries are in desperate need. Gorenflo Elementary School in Biloxi, Mississippi, lost virtually its entire collection—nearly 13,000 volumes. And this is only one example.

In Louisiana, about 90 schools are considered a total loss, and New Orleans Parish alone lost 63 percent of its 126 schools. The statistics are troubling and only begin to tell the story.

But NEA and its partners are offering you a way to help. Just join NEA's new *Books Across America* initiative and make a difference! Our partners offer many ways to participate. You can donate cash, raise funds, buy a book for a child or books for school libraries, organize a book drive, or volunteer your time. Just visit **www.nea.org/booksacross/** to find out more and get involved.

Together, we can put books back in the hands of those who have lost so much.

PHOTOS: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Take Note

Honoring Children, Libraries, Diversity

Libraries across the country will host celebrations with family programs, including bilingual story hours, book giveaways, and other literacy events on **April 30, El día de los niños/El día de los libros** (Children's Day/Book Day). Also known as Día, this national event brings together children, books, languages, and cultures in an annual celebration of the joys and wonders of childhood and the importance of literacy in the lives of families.

For more information, call your local library, or visit **www.ala.org/dia**.

Ryan White Award Nominations

Each year the NEA Health Information Network presents the Ryan White HIV Prevention Award to an NEA member or affiliate who has demonstrated a commitment to implementing or supporting innovative HIV prevention education programs. Previous winners have included the Washington Education Association and Wayne Smith of Tennessee. The award will be presented at the 2006 NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando. To nominate an individual or affiliate, contact Paul Sathrum for a nomination form at **202-822-7787** or send an e-mail to **psathrum@nea.org**. The deadline for applications is **May 26, 2006.**

Save Your Retirement Benefits

Does your school district provide teachers and support professionals with a defined-benefit or a defined-contribution retirement plan? It's important to know which—your future retirement security depends on it. With defined-benefit plans, members are guaranteed a predictable, monthly benefit that takes into account years of service multiplied by final average salary.

Defined-contribution plans are investment accounts to which you and your employer contribute—but you manage the money, putting all of the investment risk on you. In some states, various groups are working to replace defined-benefit plans provided to public employees with defined-contribution plans.

NEA offers an online tool kit, *Protecting the Retirement Security of NEA Members: A Toolkit*, to give members the knowledge and know-how needed to counter these threats. Find it at **www.nea.org/retired/tools/publications.html#toolkit**.

Reading All Year Long

By now, all of your plans are in place to make this year's Read Across America Day *Seussational*. But did you know that we have resources to help you celebrate reading all year long? Our e-newsletter provides the latest news and information from NEA's Read Across America and our partners, plus details on upcoming literacy events. Go to ww.nea.org/readacross/ to sign up for your copy today.

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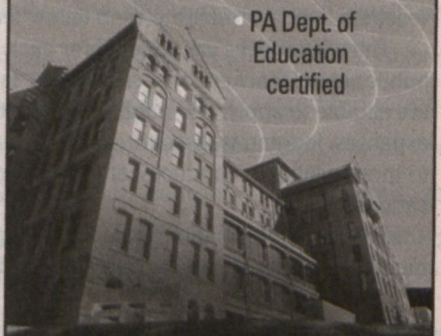

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CALL 1-800-577-6826 FOR A FREE VIDEO ABOUT THE PROGRAM!

* Scholarships are made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

March Is Youth Art Month

Created in 1961 by Art and Creative Materials Institute, Youth Art Month emphasizes the value of art education for all children and encourages support for quality school art programs.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton said, "For children, the arts are an invitation to cultivate the skill of critical thinking and to recognize the bonds that link the diverse cultures of the world. American arts education enlivens our schools, opening children's minds and awakening their senses to the human experience." *Well put!*

How can you participate?

- Request a free booklet of ideas for celebrating Youth Art Month by sending an e-mail to **sarahs@acminet.org.**
- Visit the National Art Education Association at **www.naea-reston.org/research_curriculum.html** for arts curriculum materials and lesson plans.
- Check out Musée at **www.musee-online.org/**, a portal to 37,000 museums around the world.

See Justice in Action

Have you ever wanted to see the Supreme Court in action? You could by attending the Supreme Court Summer Institute. The Institute's two 2006 seminars (June 15–20 and 22–27) include sessions led by experts, journalists, authors, and lawyers, who provide an in-depth understanding of how the Court chooses and decides cases and what it's like to argue before the Court. It culminates with a visit to the Court to hear decisions handed down. Teachers also learn skills to train fellow teachers at home.

Thirty attendees are selected for each session. Secondary public school teachers of social studies, law, and government are eligible to apply. Although participants must pay for all expenses, lodging is discounted, and a small stipend is available to those willing to conduct workshops for other teachers. Applications are due **March 20, 2006.**

For more information, including complete eligibility requirements, see **www.streetlaw.org/scipage.html.**

Global Community Service

Youth across America and the world will join together in April to perform community service projects for the 18th Annual **National & Global Youth Service Day.** On April 21–23, 2006, millions of young people around the world, with the help of volunteers, will address important, unmet community needs through community service and service-learning projects focusing on disaster relief, literacy, hunger, public safety, and the environment. For more information please visit **www.YSA.org.**

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

GOING SOMEWHERE?

IF SPRING OR SUMMER travel plans are on your radar, be sure to look at the fantastic deals NEA members get on rental cars from Hertz and Alamo. Choose from a large selection of cars, SUVs and minivans, as well as thousands of U.S. and international rental sites. At most locations, members also enjoy:

- No daily mileage limit
- No additional driver fee for spouse/domestic partner
- Special savings coupons.

To find out about the latest offers from Hertz and Alamo, go to the NEA Member Benefits Web Site at **www.neamb.com** and click on "Member Discounts." Or call the Member Service Center toll free at 1-800-637-4636, Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.) ET.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR RETIREMENT SAVINGS

APPROACHING RETIREMENT or already there? Everyone wants a stable source of income in retirement, so it's important to protect what you've already saved, and, at the same time, keep your savings working for you. Look for these hallmarks of a superior retirement savings product:

Simple. You get to choose how long you want your assets to accumulate.

Secure. Depending on your investment horizon, the product guarantees your initial investment and retirement income.

Flexible. You decide when to start receiving income and how to take it.

To find out more about managing your retirement income, call 1-800-NEA-VALU. Start building your retirement future today!

MEMBERS DROVE MORE THAN 8 MILLION MILES LAST YEAR USING THE NEA CAR RENTAL PROGRAM.

Essay Contest for Juniors

The National Endowment for the Humanities invites all eligible high school juniors to enter the 2006 Idea of America Essay Contest, offering a cash prize of $5,000 for the winning essay and $1,000 each for three finalists.

The contest encourages students to think and write analytically about significant events and individuals in American history. Students will be asked to examine the historical debate during the nation's first Congress about adopting the First Amendment. Judges will look for a strong understanding of American history, well-reasoned consideration of the topic, originality, and clear writing. Essays should be approximately 1,500 words and submitted at the Endowment's Web site by **April 19, 2006.** For more information, see **www.humanities.gov.**

ILLUSTRATION TOP: ART EXPLOSION; MIDDLE & BOTTOM: GETTY IMAGES

The tom joyner Foundation

Get prepared at one of these 7 campuses:

Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, NC
Cheyney State University, Cheyney, PA
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN
Harris-Stowe State College, St. Louis, MO

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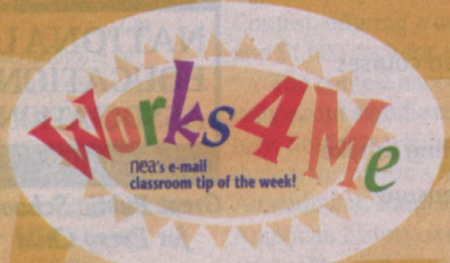
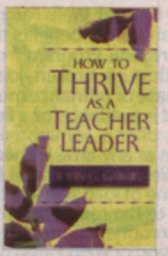


In Print

CAN ONE PERSON MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

In ***Say Something***, author Peggy Moss tells of a girl who watches silently as her peers are teased and ostracized. But after experiencing that singular humiliation for herself, she learns the true cost of remaining silent, and finds the courage the following day to speak to a lonely girl on the bus. The book is most appropriate for children in grades two through six, but this short, sweet story offers a lesson for all ages. 32 pp. $16.95 from Tilbury House Publishers. Go to www.tilburyhouse.com.

LEADERSHIP WITHOUT A NET

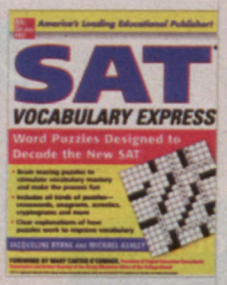


An English teacher and department chair, author John G. Gabriel shares wisdom on how to approach today's multifaceted leadership demands and implement changes in a struggling school in ***How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader***. He addresses the all-important need for building a cooperative team of teachers and administrators founded on communication and mutual respect, and provides practical suggestions for boosting morale and mediating conflicts. The book also includes a section on teaching assessments. 220 pp. $27.95 from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. To order, visit www.ascd.org/books.

A FIGHT FOR FLIGHT

With no experience and only a hodgepodge of materials, a retired cheesemaker resolves to build a flying machine. Written and illustrated as an "inventor's journal" by award-winning graphic designer Pablo Bernasconi, ***Captain Arsenio: Inventions and (Mis)Adventures in Flight*** employs quirky but oddly charming, collage-like illustrations with a Rube Goldberg sensibility to complement this tale of loony obsession. Ages 6 and up. 40 pp. $16 from Houghton Mifflin Company. Visit www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com.

THE SECRET OF MY ESCUSCS



Through crosswords, cryptograms, and a variety of other puzzles, authors Jacqueline Byrne and Michael Ashley present ***SAT Vocabulary Express: Word Puzzles Designed to Decode the New SAT*** to help make vocabulary building as painless as possible. The puzzles are designed to help students learn how to decode unknown words, establish connections among similar words, encourage educated guessing, and increase overall vocabulary. The book offers a fun and inviting way to prepare for a dreaded test. 192 pp. $12.95 from McGraw-Hill. To order, visit http://books.mcgraw-hill.com.

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DIVERSITY CALENDAR

MARCH

MARCH 6–12—NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE WEEK
Sponsored by the National Foreign Language Honor Society, Alpha Mu Gamma, this week encourages schools to celebrate the importance of foreign language study.

MARCH 16—FIRST BLACK NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED
On this day in 1827, *Freedom's Journal* was published in New York City. Subscriptions cost $3 a year. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/newbios/nwsppr/freedom/freedom.html.

MARCH 21—BAHÁ'Í NEW YEAR'S DAY (NAW-RÚZ)
Beginning on sunset of March 20, this day is one of the nine holy days of the year when work and school are suspended for those of the Bahá'í faith. The new year commences on the day of the spring equinox. For more, go to www.us.bahai.org.

APRIL

APRIL 2—INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY
A day to promote books and reading around the world, this event is celebrated on author Hans Christian Andersen's birthday. Each year, a section of the International Board on Books for Young People sponsors the day and this year it's the Slovakian Section. For more, go to www.usbby.org or www.ibby.org.

APRIL 13–20—PASSOVER (PESACH)
This Jewish festival begins at sunset on the 12th and continues until nightfall on the 20th. It commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt and marks the beginning of the harvest season.

APRIL 16—EASTER
Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ on this day, which is observed the first Sunday following the first full moon on or after the vernal equinox.

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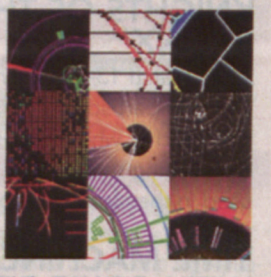
On the Web

THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING

Enrich your science curriculum with The Elegant Universe, a companion Web site to the Nova TV series that brings to life physicist Brian Greene's book on string theory. The site includes an overview of the topic—a theory that may hold the key to unifying our understanding of the forces of nature, an interview with the book's author, viewpoints from leading physicists (not all of whom agree), slideshows and interactives exploring the mathematics and science behind Greene's work, and a teaching guide. Best of all, you can watch all three hours of the TV show online. Go to **www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/.**



HEY, IT'S YOUR DEMOCRACY, TOO!

Want to know more about issues in government, but tired of political hype? Citizen Joe is a nonprofit Web site that offers information regarding current controversies and debates via thoughtful, non-partisan guides, created by people with political views ranging from liberal to conservative. The site addresses a wide spectrum of topics, from education to environmental concerns and national security. Each issue includes background and current dialogue—particularly useful for young people (and your average Citizen Joe) who are curious about governmental affairs and how national policy is formed. The site is easy to navigate and provides plenty of links for those who want to learn more. Visit **www.citizenjoe.org.**

THE ACCIDENTAL (ART) TOURIST

What better way to observe Youth Art Month than by introducing students to modern art at the pre-eminent museum in the world? That would be MOMA—the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Since its founding as an educational institution in 1929, it has become home to the world's largest collection of modern painting and sculpture, housing some 3,200 works dating from the late 19th century to the present, including all the greats—Cézanne, van Gogh, Matisse, Picasso, de Chirico, Brancusi, Mondrian, Dalí, Miró, and more. Can't organize a field trip just now? Visit MOMA online! Get an overview of its collections, tour current exhibits, preview coming attractions, access online art guides, send extremely cool e-cards, and take advantage of outstanding interactive online features for teens and children. Go to **www.moma.org.**

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

CREATIVE PORTFOLIOS: PUTTING A SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNICATION

By Jane Urbelz, Toni Prada, and Linda Schreiber

Looking for creative ways to spruce up student portfolios? Three speech pathologists team up with ideas for organizing video, journal, and "communication magazine" portfolios. Filled with reproducible forms for gathering work samples and charting progress, plus a section for educator portfolios, this book will help students and teachers self-evaluate—and show off a little! Grades 2–9. 218 pp. $37 from Thinking Publications. Call 1-800-225-GROW.

BROTHERHOOD OF CORRUPTION

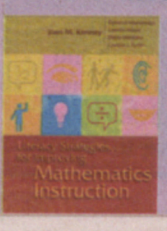
By Juan Antonio Juarez

At age 13, the author witnessed the Chicago police beat a Mexican immigrant whose only crime was holding up traffic. The incident left a lasting impression on young Juarez, who eventually joined the Chicago force for seven years before leaving to become a middle school teacher. In this gripping page-turner, he tells of his experiences in the narcotics unit—a world where respect and fear, loyalty and intimidation, and power and abuse go hand in hand. 307 pp. $24.95 from Chicago Review Press. Go to www.ipgbook.com.

LITERACY STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION

By Joan M. Kenney

In this unique approach to teaching math, the author, a math instructor at secondary and college levels, confronts teaching challenges from a linguistics standpoint, arguing that the language and symbols of math—originating from Greek and Latin—are difficult for contemporary English-speakers to comprehend. She champions listening and discourse and offers advice ranging from using props to having students visualize word problems. 113 pp. $19.95 From the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, www.ascd.org.



MOVING OUT AND MOVING ON: GUIDE FOR FEMALE TEENS AND THEIR MOTHERS

By Brenda Hayes

In this no-holds-barred manual to life, the author dispenses advice for virtually every *what-if* a teenage daughter might encounter on her way to independence and maturity—even those scenarios parents dread the most. In turn poignant, sweet, funny, and sad, these pages will no doubt find themselves slipped into letters, taped onto refrigerators, and tucked into packages from home. Includes money-saving ideas and hotline numbers. 157 pp. $14.95 from Milligan Books, Inc. Go to www.milliganbooks.com.

On TV

NUMB3RS

CBS, Fridays, 10 p.m. ET/PT.

The premise: an FBI agent, desperate for help on a complicated case, asks his brother—a math genius—for help. It sounds like a death knell for a TV series, but somehow, NUMB3RS is a new breakaway hit. The kicker is that the math used in the program is based on actual FBI cases. To complement your viewing, visit www.maa.org/editorial/mathgames/mathgames_01_21_05.html.

ON THE GULF: COASTLINES IN DANGER

Discovery Channel, March 1, 5 a.m., ET/PT.

This program looks at the challenges faced by scientists, environmentalists, and engineers dealing with the Gulf Coast's weather phenomena. Tape and use in class for one year.

THE PRESIDENTS

History Channel, March 6–10 & 13–15, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

This eight-part series surveys the major achievements of U.S. presidents, from George Washington to George W. Bush. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

FINE LIVING SALUTES EARTH DAY: 50 WAYS TO SAVE THE PLANET

Food Network, March 11 & 22, 4:30 a.m. ET/PT.

This two-part program offers tips for improving the planet and environment. Tape and use for one year. Teaching materials are available at www.foodnetwork.com/food/cable_classroom.

KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTH BRONX

A&E, March 13–14, 7 a.m. ET/PT.

This two-part special tells the story of a substitute teacher who inspires his inner-city students by teaching them chess. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years.

TIME MACHINE: FOUNDING MOTHERS WITH COKIE ROBERTS

History Channel, March 20, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

Timely programming for Women's History Month! A look at the women behind the Founding Fathers and how they helped keep a fragile new country from falling into partisan discord. One episode dramatizes Deborah (Mrs. Benjamin) Franklin at age 57, protecting her home and children from a Philadelphia mob. Based on bestselling radio and television journalist Cokie Roberts' book. Tape and use in class for two years.

THE QUEEN OF TREES

Nature, March 26, 8–9 p.m. ET/PT.

The story of the sycomore fig (spelled with an "o") and its tiny pollinator—the fig wasp—describes one of the most remarkable symbiotic relationships in the natural world. It is a triumph of co-evolution, told for the first time in a way that combines intricate detail with the grandness of Africa.

THE CRUSADES: CRESCENT & THE CROSS

History Channel, March 27–30, 6 a.m. ET/PT.

This four-part documentary traces the history of the ancient and bloody conflict between Islam and Christianity for control of the Holy City, Jerusalem—a struggle that has reverberated down through the centuries. Can be taped and used in class for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

THE LION IN WINTER

Hallmark, March 27 & April 3, 3 a.m. ET/PT.

Based on James Goldman's play, this two-part 2004 movie features Patrick Stewart as an aging King Henry II, who reluctantly brings together his scheming, imprisoned wife and their three sons to announce his successor. Tape and use in class for one year.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

CELEBRATING LIFE IN APRIL

Today, over 90,000 people are waiting for the gift of life, provided through organ, tissue, marrow, or blood donations. Each day, about 74 people receive an organ transplant, but 17 die waiting for transplants that can't take place because of the shortage of donated organs.

To raise awareness of the critical need for donors, the nation has celebrated April as National Donate Life Month since 2003.

Donor recognition and remembrance ceremonies, races and walkathons, sporting games, fund-raisers, and other events are held around the country to promote donation and thank deceased organ and tissue donors, living organ donors, and donor family members for sharing life.

Creative and caring people are celebrating National Donate Life Month by spreading the word across America that donation saves lives. Don't hesitate to join them by becoming an organ donor through these simple ways:

- Go to www.organdonor.gov to download, print, sign, and carry a donor card
- Say *yes* to donation on your driver's license
- Sign up with your state's donor registry (if your state has one).

And don't forget to discuss your decision with your family—they may be asked to give consent.

For more information on National Donate Life Month and how you can help raise awareness and support this life-giving cause, turn your Web browser to **www.organdonor.gov.**

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'Courageous Conversations'

A Black educator tells how his school is dealing with unfair treatment of minority students.

BY JACOB ELLIS

A White teacher once said to me, "If a group of White students is smoking cigarettes along the schoolyard fence, that doesn't feel like a crisis. But if a group of Black students is walking down the hall talking loud, that does feel like a crisis." He was being very honest, and that's important.

Another time, I heard a White teacher say to a Black student, "I have worked at a predominantly Black school and I'm not afraid of you." You know that student is saying to himself, "Where did that come from?"

As educators of all children, we need to confront the fact that minority children are disciplined more harshly than White children.

Why does it happen? One reason is that Black students are louder than White students. I'm Black and I'm loud. I'm loud at home. I laugh out loud. If you're not part of the Black culture, that loudness can be perceived as intrusive and disrespectful, while within the Black culture it may not be. So part of the problem is these cultural differences.

Another reason: Every time you turn on the TV, they're talking about a Black person doing something bad. But when it's a White person, they don't mention the fact that the person is Caucasian, it's "So-and-so did it."

When people are bombarded with that, day after day, they form the mental image that Black people are to be feared.

So you have White teachers saying—and I appreciate their honesty—"I'm more comfortable dealing with White students."

What can be done about this?

At Nathan Hale High School in Seattle (roughly 60 percent White, 20 percent Black, 20 percent Asian), we've organized what we call "courageous conversations."

Nathan Hale High School's Diversity Club reaches across ethnic lines.

"ALL WE CAN DO is listen to each other and believe each other when we talk about our experiences."

A group of 10 Black students talked to the staff about their everyday experiences. For example, you walk into a store and they're following you. Live through enough of these incidents in your life and you really begin to understand you are different.

The staff didn't ask questions, they just listened. It was very powerful.

In another "courageous conversation," we invited minority parents to come in and talk about their experiences negotiating the public school system. One said, "I walk up to the office counter and wait for someone to respond to me and I'm ignored."

Little things like that are important.

Or, "My student was failing, but it wasn't until the end of the semester that anybody bothered to contact me."

We had a third round of conversations in which minority teachers shared their experiences.

The White staff members were comfortable at these conversations because we were not playing the blame game.

If you're White, you will never know what it is like to be a Black person, and I will never know what it is to be a White person. All we can do is listen to each other and believe each other when we talk about our experiences.

Since then, our staff has become much more aware of their behavior in responding to all kids.

As Activities Coordinator for our school, I try to involve minority students in leadership positions in clubs and other activities. When you put students in situations like that, they get to know each other and find out they have the same likes, fears, and concerns.

We have a Diversity Club that started four years ago with 20 students. Now it has over 140 students—about half White and half minority—and 10 faculty advisors. One thing that happens in this club is that students talk about their cultures and their experiences.

I love our school. It's the most cohesive school I've ever been in. We have a culture of respect for each other. Parents tell us they can feel it very quickly when they walk into our building.

So my message is this: We have a problem. It's deep and it's difficult. But we can do something about it.

Jacob Ellis, a former guidance counselor, is Dean of Students and Activities Coordinator at Nathan Hale High School in Seattle.

PHOTO: STEVE SHELTON

THE 2006 VUE. With this many changes, one look isn't enough. The VUE has a new front end, a newly refined interior, and even more standard features including a CD player with built-in MP3 jack and steering wheel audio controls, remote keyless entry, and OnStar® with service for one year.[1] See more at saturn.com/vue.

[1]OnStar includes one-year Safe & Sound Service. Call 1-888-4ONSTAR (1-888-466-7827) or visit onstar.com for system limitations and details. VUE AWD V6 shown with optional equipment. ©2006 Saturn Corporation.

NEA-Sponsored CD

4.65% APY*

valid 2/6/06-2/12/06

(12-month term)
$1,000 minimum opening balance

AmSouth, Florida	3.20% APY** (12-month term, valid 2/1/06)
Hudson United, Pennsylvania	2.50% APY** (12-month term, valid 2/1/06)
Citibank, New York	3.80% APY** (12-month term, valid 2/1/06)

NEA-sponsored yield shown is subject to change weekly. Yields shown are for comparison purposes only. Please call MBNA for current NEA-sponsored yields or visit www.neamb.com/cd

Simple arithmetic

As an NEA member, you don't have to do complicated calculations to figure out how to earn deposit yields that have been among the highest in the nation. All you have to do is open an NEA-Sponsored Certificate of Deposit℠ offered by MBNA. You'll not only enjoy a great yield on your deposit, you can also rest assured knowing your savings are FDIC-insured up to $100,000 per depositor. What's more, you can take advantage of a low minimum opening deposit of just $1,000 – and several terms from six to 60 months. So, if you or a member of your family† would like to earn a great yield on your savings, forget the complicated calculations and choose the NEA-Sponsored CD. For current yields or to open an account, call MBNA today. Or visit us at **www.neamb.com/cd**

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nea Member Benefits
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Each Depositor Insured to $100,000
FDIC
FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

Call MBNA at 1·800·457·2258
and mention priority code **New Code JA0UG**

*The NEA-Sponsored CD Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is valid from 2/6/06 through 2/12/06, based on a $1,000 minimum opening balance, 365-day calendar year, a term of 12 months, and assumes that interest remains in the account until maturity. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal of CD principal. Withdrawals and fees may reduce earnings.

**All other bank APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 2/1/06, based on a $1,000 minimum balance and a term of 12 months. Source – *Market Rates Insight*, 2/1/06.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

The NEA-Sponsored CD has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred yields through the NEA-Sponsored CD. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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